



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE CODE: MAC 117

COURSE TITLE: WRITING FOR THE MASS MEDIA I



CONTENTS		PAGE
Module 1	.....	1
Unit 1	Definition and Basics of Media Writing	1
Unit 2	Broadcast Style	13
Unit 3	Print Style	21
Unit 4	Advertising Style	29
Unit 5	Public Relations Style	39
Module 2	.....	46
Unit 1	Writing the Lead/Headlines	46
Unit 2	An Ear for Writing.....	55
Unit 3	Information Sources	63
Unit 4	Revising, Editing and Proof-Reading	72
Unit 5	Organizing the Facts	80
Module 3	.....	87
Unit 1	Conciseness	87
Unit 2	Avoiding Banality	94
Unit 3	Readability Formulas	100
Unit 4	Semantics	106
Unit 5	Correct Usage	113



**COURSE
GUIDE**

**MAC 117
WRITING FOR THE MASS MEDIA I**

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CONTENTS	PAGE
Introduction.....	iv
Course Aim.....	iv
Course Objectives.....	iv
Working through This Course	v
Course Material.....	v
Study Units.....	v
Assessments	vi
Tutor-Marked Assignment	vi
Final Examination and Grading.....	vii
Course Marking Scheme.....	vii
Presentation Schedule	vii
Course Overview.....	vii
How to Get the Most Out of This Course.....	viii
Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials.....	x
Summary.....	x

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to MAC117: Writing for the Mass Media I

This is a 2 –credit unit course for undergraduate students in Mass Communication. The course materials have been packaged with the Nigerian context in focus but with global perspective. This Course Guide gives you an overview of the course content. It also provides you with information, the organization and requirements of the course together with recommended texts.

COURSE AIMS

The aims are to equip you to understand the social institution known as the Mass Media and how you can slant your writing skills when writing for the mass media in order for it to achieve its role in society. These broad aims will be achieved by:

- i. Introducing you to the basic concepts in writing for the Mass Media.
- ii. Highlighting how various principles of effective media writing can be achieved.
- iii. Demonstrating how these can be applied for the various media.
- iv. Exposing you generally to writing as a way of earning a living.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To achieve the aims set out above, MAC117 has an overall objective apart from the specific objectives of the various component units. These units objective is spelt out at the beginning of each unit in the three modules. You are strongly advised to read them before you start working through the unit. You can as well consult it regularly as you progress with each unit.

Here are the wider objectives for the course as a whole. By meeting the objectives you count yourself as meeting the aim of the course.

On successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- a. Define the mass media.
- b. Explain what slant writing is.
- c. Explain the importance of research and sources in writing.
- d. Explain what constitute journalistic style.
- e. Discuss how to develop ear for writing.

- f. List medium requirements when writing.
- g. Explain what editing and proofreading are all about.
- h. Understand why the mass media are always in a hurry.
- i. Be conversant with media writing jargons.
- j. Justify why we have a writing style for the mass media.

WORKING THROUGH THIS COURSE

To complete the course, you are required to read the study units and other related materials. You will also need to undertake practical exercise under the supervision of your facilitator. The exercises are to aid you bridge the gap between what obtains in the classroom with what obtains in the newsroom. At the end of the course, you will be required to write and pass the final examination.

COURSE MATERIALS

The major materials you will need for this course are:

- i. Course guide
- ii. Study units
- iii. Assignment file
- iv. Relevant textbooks
- v. You may also need to expose yourself to programs in Radio/Television and read your fair share of the dailies
- vi. As a beginner, you need to socialize with practicing journalists and other media writers by visiting media houses on your own.

STUDY UNITS

There are 15 units (of three modules) in this course. They are listed below:

Module 1

- Unit 1 Definition and Basics of Media Writing
- Unit 2 Broadcast Style
- Unit 3 Print Style
- Unit 4 Advertising Style
- Unit 5 Public Relations Style

Module 2

- Unit 1 Writing the Lead/Headlines
- Unit 2 Ear for Writing

Unit 3	Information Sources
Unit 4	Revising, Editing and proofreading
Unit 5	Organizing the Facts

Module 3

Unit 1	Conciseness
Unit 2	Avoiding Banality
Unit 3	Readability Formulas
Unit 4	Semantics
Unit 5	Correct Usage

ASSESSMENTS

An assessment file and a marking scheme will be made available to you. In the assessment file, you will find details of the works you must submit to your tutor for marking. There are two aspects of the assessment of this course; the tutor marked and the written examination. The marks you obtain in these two areas will make up your final marks, with the Tutor Marked assignment acting as your Continuous Assessment (CA). The assignment must be submitted to your tutor for final assessment in accordance with the deadline stated in the presentation schedule and the assignment file. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total score.

TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

You will have to submit a specified number of the (TMAs). Every unit in this course has a Tutor Marked Assignment. You will be assessed on four (4) of them but the best three performances from the (TMAs) will be used for your 30% grading. When you have completed each assignment, send it together with the Tutor Marked Assignment Form to your tutor. Make sure each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline for submission. If for any reason you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor for a discussion on the possibility of an extension. Extension will not be granted after the due date, unless under exceptional circumstances.

FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING

The final examination will be a test of three hours. All areas of the course will be examined. Find time to read the units all over before your examination. The final examination will attract 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions, which

reflect the kinds of self assessment exercises and tutor marked assignment you have previously encountered. And all aspects of the course will be assessed. You should use your time between completing the last unit and taking the examination to revise the entire course.

COURSE MARKING SCHEME

The following table lays out the actual course mark allocation is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignment: Best Three Out of Four Marked	30%
Final Examination	70%
Total	100%

PRESENTATION SCHEDULE

The dates for submission of all assignments will be communicated to you. You will also be told the day of completing the study units and the dates for examinations.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Unit	Title of Work	Weeks	Activity
	Course Guide		
Module 1			
1	Definitions and Basics of Media Writing	Week 1	Assignment 1
2	Broadcast Style	Week 1	Assignment 2
3	Print Style	Week 2	Assignment 3
4	Advertising Style	Week 2	Assignment 4
5	Public Relation Style	Week 2	Assignment 5
Module 2			
1	Writing the Lead/Headlines	Week 3	Assignment 6
2	Ear for Writing	Week 4	Assignment 7
3	Information Sources	Week 4	Assignment 8
4	Revising Editing or Proofreading	Week 5	Assignment 9
5	Organising the Facts	Week 6	Assignment 5
Module 3			
1	Conciseness	Week 7	Assignment 1
2	Avoiding Banality	Week 8	Assignment 2
3	Readability Formulas	Week 9	Assignment 3
4	Semantics	Week 10	Assignment 4
5	Correct Usage	Week 11	Assignment 5

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS COURSE

In distance learning programmes, the study units replace the university lecture. That means you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace. This is one of the advantages of distance learning as long as you did not take things for granted. Let your mind-set when you are reading the lecture to be the same with that of a listener to the lecturer in the classroom. In the same way a lecturer might give you some reading to do, the study unit tells you where to read and which are your text materials. The only difference is that the lecturer is not physically with you. You are provided exercises to do at the appropriate points, just as a lecturer might give you an-in class exercise. Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit, and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next to this is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. These learning objectives are meant to guide your study. The moment a unit is finished, you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives.

If this is made a habit, then you will significantly prove your chances of passing the course. The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be from the set books or from the reading section. The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any trouble, telephone your tutor right away. Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need assistance do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

- i. Read this Course Guide thoroughly, it is your first assignment.
- ii. Organize a study schedule: Design a course overview to guide you through the course. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit, and how the assignment relate to the units.
- iii. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything to stay faithful to it. The major reason why students fail is that they get behind with their work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please, let your tutor know before it is too late to help.

- iv. Turn to unit 1, and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
- v. Assemble the study materials: You will need your set of books and the unit you are studying at any point in time. As you work through the unit, you will know what source to consult for further information.
- vi. Always keep in touch with your centre for up-to-date course information carefully.
- vii. Well, before the relevant due dates, strive to do your assignment carefully. They have been designed to help you meet the objectives of the course and, therefore, will help you pass the examination. Submit all assignments not later than the due date.
- viii. Regularly review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them.
- ix. Design a study plan and be sure to follow it strictly.
- x. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objective, you can move to the next unit. It's advisable to proceed unit-by-unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep your self on target.
- xi. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. And when the assignment is returned, pay attention to your tutor's comments, both on tutor-marked assignment form and also the written comments on the ordinary assignment.
- xii. After completing that last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives and the course objectives (listed here).

FACILITATORS/TUTORS AND TUTORIAL

Information relating to the tutorials will be provided at the appropriate time. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to yourself during the course. You must take your tutor marked assignments to

the study centre well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible. On your own you can constitute a private tutorial with your colleagues to enable you share ideas. Do not hesitate to contact your tutor. If you need help, contact your tutor if:

- You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned reading.
- You have difficulty with the exercises.
- You have a question or problem with an assignment or with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.
- When you are not sure of up-to-date information or development in your centre.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have a face- to- face contact with your tutor and your classmates. It enables you to have instant answers to questions and share opinion. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in the discussion actively.

SUMMARY

The Course Guide gives you an overview of what to expect in the course of this study. The course teaches you the basic principles of packaging information for the mass media, and how these principles can be applied by slanting your writing according to a medium's requirement.

We wish you success in this course and hope that you will find it both interesting and rewarding.

MODULE 1

Unit 1	Definition and Basics of Media Writing
Unit 2	Broadcast Style
Unit 3	Print Style
Unit 4	Advertising Style
Unit 5	Public Relations Style

UNIT1 DEFINITION AND BASICS OF MEDIA WRITING CONCEPT**CONTENTS**

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Definition of the Mass Media
3.2	Challenges of the Mass Media Writing
3.3	Obligations of the Media Writer
3.4	Considerations of the Media Writer
3.5	Principles of Good Media Writing
3.6	Qualities of a Media Writer
3.7	Media Writing Glossary
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Writing for the Mass Media 1 is a very interesting study and it touches every aspect of media writing. Interestingly, the core purpose of the mass media as an institution is writing and disseminating information. This course is therefore central to media success as this unit is central to understanding the entire course from the scratch. This unit introduces you to the definition of basic concepts, with the holistic view of what constitutes the mass media and their peculiarities.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define the basic concepts in Mass Media writing
- discuss the necessary considerations for media writing
- discuss the principles of good media writing
- enumerate the qualities of a media writer
- identify the challenges a media writer faces

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of the Mass Media

The mass media have emerged in contemporary society as one of the powerful institutions for societal change and development. Rationally, the mention of mass media invokes mental pictures of radio, television, newspaper, magazines, e.t.c. They constitute the channels through which information circulates for enlightenment and education of the public. Basically, it means that the mass media writers are in the primary business of information gathering, writing, and dissemination. Uyo (1987:11) points out that the deeper understanding of the nature of the mass media is essential for writing effectively for the mass media. DeFleur and Dennis, quoted by Uyo (1987:2), defined mass media as devices for moving messages across distance and time to accomplish mass communication. Blake and Haroldsen, also cited by Uyo, refer to the mass media as “technical vices through which mass communication take place. The mass media therefore have the nature of being:

- Easily noticed
- They possess the nature of being outspoken.
- It is also in their nature and character to always be in a hurry.
- They are publicist in nature.

Characteristically, the mass media are naturally open to public service. That is, the element of commercialization and profit making should not be pushed to the extreme in regards to the mass media. Also, the mass media are institutions that are both generalist and specialist. That is, at any point in time media presentations must have something for groups and individuals. They exhibit the character of being independent which must be upheld by the polity if the mass media are to save as the last hope of the common man and the voice of the voiceless. Message types presented in the mass media include:

- **News Stories:** This is a straight, formal, objective, balanced, accurate, and timely account of a factual event. Here, the 5Ws & H are emphasised at the very beginning of the story as quick as possible.
- **News Analysis:** This can be described as a less objective assessment of the issues in the news. That is, breaking down of news events in order to highlight the important point. It is an attempt to explain for better understanding the events that make headlines.

- **Editorial/Commentary:** An editorial comment is the official stand of a media organization concerning a typical issue. The editorials and commentaries are usually given prominent play in the media.
- **Advertising/Commercials:** These are materials that must be paid for before they are printed or aired. The word advertisement is more in use in print media just as commercials are popular among broadcast media.
- **Feature Article:** These are less time conscious presentations of the mass media. Although they are timely and typical, they are usually presented in relax atmosphere. That is, it is written with a mental picture of the relaxed reader who has time at his disposal.
- **Opinion Article:** Opinion articles are subjective opinion of the individual writer. The writer is at liberty to express himself on any issue as long as it confines to the laws of the land.
- **Discussion:** This is a presentation of the broadcast media. It is a kind of panel analysis in which a presenter or anchor person selects a topic together with experts to discuss the topic with on air. It is a popular programme menu by most broadcasting stations.
- **Talk:** Talk is equally a broadcasting affair. It is one of the innovations of broadcast presentations. Here the host engages the audience on an interesting topic. Such topics are usually emotional in nature. The host moderates the presentation of the participants.
- **Drama Presentation:** Drama/musicals are one of the popular presentations in broadcasting. They constitute the bulk of the entertainment function and glamour of the broadcast media. Drama production is a basic function of the programmes department.
- **Cartoons:** These are aspect of reporting that comes in artworks. They are caricatures that go above amusement and laughter. Cartoons are presented by both print and broadcast media.
- **Letters to the Editor:** They are an audience participatory presentation by the print media. Its equivalent in broadcasting is phone-in programs. They are feedback oriented. That is, the readers and the viewers are given an opportunity to react to media presentations.

Technically, we characterize the mass media as the institutionalised running- records of a society. The representation of the day-to-day going on of social process is filtered through the apparatus of the mass media writers. The mass media are a writing profession and all media writers are expected to write. Writing is the ability to put pen and paper in order to express an idea or share a meaning with your readers. To be good at it, a media writer should be able to develop nose for information, arrange the information in a logical, coherent and interesting way that is suitable to the message's purpose, to the audience and to the medium. Furthermore, this expectation to write, places a lot challenges on the media writer who must hone his or her writing skills in order to be relevant to the contemporary society.

The following are the salient points of the definition that needs elaboration:

The mass media are an institution.

Its functions are for societal good.

The ability to write is fundamental to media success.

The media deals with documentation.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain the commonsensical and technical meaning of the mass media?

3.2 Challenges of Mass Media Writing

Everything written for the media has to work, or you have wasted your time and someone's money and time. A professional media writer must master the language and the peculiarity of all the media. Challenges arise for you as a media writer in these three areas:

Message

You have to consider the kind of message you are presenting and write accordingly. A straight news report is not written in quite the same way as an in-depth analysis. Also, a news or press release is different from a feature and both are quite different from advertorials.

Commercial messages have more in common with editorial because they too are persuasive, but like the different appeals of editorial, commercial messages make particular appeal based on purpose. Problem occurs in understanding how to alternate 'having something to say' and 'how to say it' in trying to deliver the message. A news story written to inform, is more likely to be read through to the end if it is also

entertaining. Features that entertain may also inform. Commercial messages that persuade may also entertain.

The difficulty of writing or communicating through the mass media is the lack of immediate feedbacks from your audience. The mass media writer does not have that opportunity.

Messenger

In writing for others through the mass media you must be acutely conscious of your own perspectives. You must be aware that some words may be acutely conscious of your own perspectives. You must be aware that some words may have different meanings to others. Look at what you have written to see whether you have examined all the ways others might view it. This is a particular problem sometimes for public relations people who have to write a release that will be approved by top management yet pass the careful scrutiny of news editors who routinely look out for missing or misleading information. The mass media audiences are diverse. Your writing style must be accessible to all, and at the same time you must not forget that certain types of readers and listeners or viewers expect certain types of write-ups. On the sports page for example, your style must be appropriate for sports enthusiasts yet clear enough to be understood by more casual readers.

Another important thing to note is the level of abstractions. Words with vague referents are said to be abstract. The further away you get from the specific, the less sure you can be that someone will know what you are writing about. Write about a man and not men. Also important in this regard is context. The words surrounding a word help to explain it. The meaning never resides in the words alone. Context also helps explain a word that might be unfamiliar to your audience.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss the challenges of a Media Writer?

3.3 Obligations of the Media Writer

You have some responsibilities to your audiences in the mass media. You are obliged to be honest, accurate and fair. This applies across the board of all media writing as prescribed by code of ethics that guide media practice. They are also constrained by a wide range of laws and regulations. Your obligations as a media writer can be broadly classified into the following:

Obligation to your profession.
Obligation to your medium.
Obligation to the society-your readers.

One of the virtues that help a media writer fulfil all these obligations and still remain above board is honesty. Honesty means representing the reality of a situation as accurately as the language will allow.

Perhaps the most useful contribution of semantics to media writing is the division of statement into these three main groups:

Reports: A report is a statement of fact. It refers to something that can be observed and verified by checking reliable records.

Inferences: These are logical conclusions. Semanticist Hayakawa calls an inference “a statement about the unknown made on the basis of the known”. Writing reports based on the inference alone can be risky. Audience may infer guilt when news reporter says a person had no comment even though the person is merely obeying legal counsel.

Judgement: A judgemental statement is an expression of approval or disapproval. Judgements are carefully used in media writing because all observers might not share it. The writer must know the difference between them to avoid misleading the audience.

If a writer makes a report appear to be a judgement for instance, the audience may mistakenly disregard legitimate information as just somebody’s opinion. If an inference is disguised as a report, the audience may take important steps based on a belief that turns out to be false.

Another important virtue that helps a media writer fulfil his obligation is accuracy. But no one denies that reporters sometimes add a few details that they aren’t sure of or make a direct quotation a little more dramatic and articulate than the source’s actual words. No matter how widespread these practices are, though, they remain bad practices. If you must use a fictional name to protect a person’s identity, be sure to tell the readers that. Anytime you have doubts about what you have written, don’t submit it. Fiction in information is never justified. Statement from sources can be incorrect or matter of opinion and should be therefore being clearly attributed to source.

And finally, fairness is equally important. Most of the issues that warrant media write-ups are usually conflicts, controversies and events that involve more than one party. Fairness demands that the writer gives

the parties equal play in the write up. In order to uphold the principles of fairness in our write-up, Bradler offers the following suggestions:

No write up is fair if it omits facts.

No write-up is fair if it includes irrelevant information at the expense of significant facts.

No write up is fair if it consciously or unconsciously misleads or even deceives the reader.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Identify the areas of obligation for Media Writer.

3.4 Considerations for Media Writing

Media writers owe their audience three major considerations:

Writing with Care: Careless construction had created enormous and potentially libellous errors. Although copy editors are supposed to catch the errors before they are printed, the writer has the responsibility not to create the problem. The writer who understands grammar and punctuations and who makes the effort to use words precisely stands a good chance of getting the intended message across to the readers. Even an error as slight as a single comma that is out of place can cause confusion. It is the writer's job to make the reader's job as easy as possible. The more effort you require of the reader, the fewer readers you will have. Even in broadcast writing, where the inflections of speech may make the meaning clear, grammar and punctuation must be taken into account.

Style: Media writers must know and observe the style rules of Standard English. Although, they have the additional burden of obeying the rules of the medium they are writing for. Most publications, broadcast stations and public relations operations have stylebook that specifies certain company conventions in matters of writing. The style model established by Associated Press (AP) is widely followed by media writers. Adopting a media writing style means developing a way of expressing ideas that represent you well to the media consumers, allow you to feel comfortable, and communicate your intended message. Media writing style is an epitome of economy which is getting the most meaning from the fewest number of words and grace, which means expressing your ideas in an appealing and skilful manner.

Clarity: Good writing is not necessarily good media writing. Some of the world's great literature would be out of place without print, not to mention on the air. But good media writing must be functional to be good writing. The media writer must make the audience's task as easy

as possible. Sentences should be instantly clear. Tangled syntax and confusing words could cause readers to turn the page and listeners to turn the dial. The key to clarity is writing simply and directly. Write what you have to in plain English.

The following expert's advice can be of help:

Think about what you want to write; organize your material.

Be brief, keep sentences short and avoid a succession of loose sentences.

Use specific but simple language; avoid jargon and redundancies.

Use active voice; inject variety into your choice of words and sentence structure.

Be logical, check for accuracy and presentation of ideas.

Get candid critiques of your writing from good writers and editors.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

List the factors a Media Writer must take into consideration.

3.5 Principles of Good Media Writing

Good media writers are both born and made. The following are some of the principles that run parallel to both.

Be Concise: Strive to get your message across in the fewer possible words. The objective of effective journalistic writing should be to avoid cumbersomeness without becoming choppy. You have to guard against superfluous words, phrases and clauses. A good media writer is the business of giving audience information not building their vocabulary. Use words that your audience will understand much of the time, replace the unfamiliar with familiar ones.

Be Concrete: Many times the problem is not so much a word's unfamiliarity as its level of abstraction. Our earlier on discussion on semantics shows that all words to some degree are abstract. But the closer the words are to something visual, something real, the easier the word will be to understand. Good media writers prefer words that give the reader something to see.

Be Positive: Statement in positive form is easier to read and understand than evasive and negative construction. And they make the message more forcefully more direct and interesting. According to Strunk and White, 'not' is a weak word. Somehow, they contend that reader is consciously or unconsciously dissatisfied with being told only what is and what is not without what is. (Newson 1988) pp. 29-39.

Be Organized: Good organization means that the sentences and paragraphs come in the right order. One leads naturally to the next. Don't throw sentences at your readers haphazardly. Make a point clearly, support it and then make a smooth transition to the next point. Good transitions are essential in guiding the audience from one sentence to the next. Changes in thought must be clearly signalled. Transitional words and phrases that could establish the relationship between sentences and paragraphs include: however, moreover, nevertheless, furthermore, in spite of this, despite this, e.t.c.

Be Natural: It is wrong to think that writing calls for language that is more formal and sophisticated than speech. It is true that some types of writing do. One of the golden rules of good writing is 'write the way you talk.' This does not mean the writer should reproduce the repetitions and circumlocutions of everyday conversation. But writer should use natural words as short, single sentence. Natural language is one of the media writer's most effective ways of making a write-up interesting.

Be Readable: There is nothing mysterious about making something readable. It is just a matter of applying the readability developed by experts. The most important of these principles are:

Keep sentences short.
 Keep paragraph short.
 Use short common words.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

What are the principles of good media writing?

3.6 Qualities of a Media Writer

More often than not, writing proceeds like this: collecting materials-trying to find a good approach-spending sometime on something else. It is here that media writing defers from other forms of writing. The media writer must therefore be astutely conscious of the deadline syndrome-which is the official time that the write-up must be turned in. The media writer must be a student of human nature that is the ability to see what others are not seeing concerning happenings in society. A state of nature is a terrible state, and only those with human spirit will be inspired to pick ideas of what to write about from this angle.

Another quality of a media writer is creativity. It manifests in the form of word choice and the ability to combine ideas and form words. That is why some people see journalists as wordsmiths and word discoverers.

Today, a lot of English words have lost their bit and tagged clichés because of over flogging by the media. Creativity means going beyond the conventional.

Furthermore, a media writer must have an ear for writing. A good media writer must have the ability to identify a good write-up and be able to appreciate it and be able to duplicate same himself.

In addition, a media writer must be somebody who functions perfectly under pressure. Media operations are usually time bound. Some people have described the newsroom as a mad house because of the high level of complexity and complicated nature of preparing information for the mass media. A good media writer should be able to work under such conditions without blowing up his top.

Also, a media writer must possess speed and agility. Most media information is perishable, it must, therefore be relayed or shared before it goes stale.

Further to the foregoing, the following qualities are equally important and necessary:

Good Education: It can be seen as an all-round training that makes one efficient not only in his profession but for general and functional knowledge. The late Tai Solarin once said that in order to insure good education, Nigerian undergraduates should be made to study history and geography no matter their discipline. Good education also includes an impeccable knowledge of the principles of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Another good quality of a media writer is the ability to analyse information. This entails the ability to separate fact from fiction. That is being able to break down information into functional areas for effectiveness with the various publics that look up to the media for further education. Also the media writer must possess the nose for news or information. News has an aroma just like a game and only a hound media writer like an experienced hunting dog can be able to sniff it and follow it to conclusion. Also, a media writer must be impartial in his news selection and writing style. That is he must be objective. He should not allow himself to be given in to cheap stereotypes and prejudices that emotionally colour write-ups. Also a media writer needs a lot of imagination this enables him to see and hear what others are not seeing and hearing. It is this quality that enables a good writer find ‘copy’ anytime anywhere.

3.7 Media Writing Glossary

Furthermore, he needs good command of the language. Language may not necessary be English but any language is a common medium of exchange between the medium writer and the reading public. Language generally is the palm oil with which palm oil is eaten. Also a media writer must possess knowledge of the relevant laws governing media practice in the country he is operating. Such knowledge will enable him not to run foul of laws of defamation of character, copyright, privacy, obscenity, e.t.c. In addition and more importantly, the media writer of the twenty-first century must be computer literate. This saves him the unnecessary delay of processing manuscript. Media writers who are computer literate can compose their stories right away in their laptops.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 6

What are the qualities of a good Media Writer?

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have tried to explain that writing for the mass media involves understanding what constitutes the mass media and the need to write to specification of the various media. It also exposes you to the rudiment of writing and how to develop an ear for writing and how to prepare your copy for publication in the media.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have dealt with the meaning and scope of the mass media writing, from the preliminary stage by looking at the various aspects of definition and requirements for success in media writing.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What do you understand by the term mass media?
2. What are the challenges and obligations of media writing?
3. Good media writers are born and made-discuss?

7.0 REFERENCES/FUTHER READING

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UNIT 2 BROADCAST STYLE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Broadcast Style Manual
 - 3.2 Approaches to Broadcast Writing
 - 3.3 Hearing What You Write
 - 3.4 Warming Up the Listener
 - 3.5 Writing to Pictures
 - 3.6 Common Errors to Avoid
 - 3.7 Punctuation Marks
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The various media seek basically the same type of information. However, there are basic differences in how these media write and edit their materials. Oral style has to do with the selection and placement of stories in the simplest manner. The public is trained to observe with its eyes but not with its ears. The eye and the ear must transmit signals to the brain. But the ear must transmit them the first time it hears. It cannot go back and rehear unlike the eye that can go back and reread. So when you write for the ear, you must do so in the fashion that will assure the highest probability of accurate reception and transmission of your signals to the brain. This means that an oral writer must simplify his own and other people's ideas; thoughts, words, language, sentence and punctuation.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the broadcast style manual
- discuss approaches to broadcast writing
- explain how to hear what you write
- apply the big words and statistics
- explain how to warm up listeners
- identify common errors and avoid them
- apply punctuation marks.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Broadcast Style Manual

A style manual is preparing, copy for the air is essential if copy preparation is to be uniform. It is strongly suggested that this manual be mastered carefully before you try to write for the air. In this style manual, you are going to learn how to handle the following when writing for the air:

- **Abbreviations:** The general rule is not to use abbreviations unless you want the material read as abbreviations. With few exceptions, abbreviations are barred from oral copy. Exceptions from this rule are Mr.; Mrs., Dr., etc. Also excepted are well known organisation that are readily identifiable in the initials like FBI, EFCC, etc and there are usually a hyphen between letters i.e. F-B-I, E-F-C-C. Abbreviated names of some organisation are pronounced as a single word and do not require hyphens. Examples are NEPA, NATO, NAFDAC, etc.
- **Names and Titles:** Never start a write up with an unfamiliar name. It is your responsibility as a radio and TV writer to tell announcers how to pronounce difficult or unfamiliar names. Titles are not repeated after first reference to a person.
- **Quotations:** Handling direct quotations in oral copy presents a special problem because quotation marks cannot be seen by the listener. Therefore, the newscaster or presenter must have some way of letting listeners know exactly when a direct quote starts and when it ends. You the writer can help the presenter by rephrasing direct quotations into indirect quotes. The expressions – quote and unquote was widely used in the early days of radio but has become largely obsolete. Other expressions have come into use such as – He said... and we quote him... As he put it.... Still quoting the president...
- **Numbers:** Numbers in radio and TV writing present a special problem. It is difficult for listeners to grasp the meaning of statistics in rapidly read copy.

In writing time, use figures don't use PM or AM. They can be confusing on the air. Use this morning, this afternoon, tonight. In writing addresses, dates and ordinals, use figures.

Use st, nd, rd, th, after figures to be read as ordinals. In telephone numbers and car plate number, use hyphenated figures e.g. BZ 1-8-7-ENU the numbers repeated on air.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

How do we handle quotation and abbreviations on air?

3.2 Approaches to Oral Writing

Simplicity is the central approach of writing for the air. The public is trained to observe with its eyes but not with its ears. The eye and the ear must transmit signals to the brain. But the ear must transmit them the first time it hears your message. It cannot go back and rehear, as the eye can go back and reread written communication so when you write for the ear, you must do so in the fashion. Fashion that will assure the highest probability of accurate reception and transmission of your signals to the brain. This means that before you put pen on paper to write for Radio and TV, you must simplify your ideas, thoughts, words, language, sentences and punctuation. Begin simplifying your language by simplifying your sentences. The best way to communicate on air is the simple declarative sentence – subject – verb – object. However, you must guide against the habit of short, jerky and disconnected sentences and thoughts. Your writing should have transition, should flow. Talk to the paper as you write. This will help you gain the conventional approach.

Generally you can and should avoid complicating phrases and clauses. Most punctuation for broadcasting will be commas, periods and dashes.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

List and discuss the essentials before you write for the air.

3.3 Hearing What You Write

An average person, when setting down his thoughts in writing sees what he has said. An experienced radio writer hears his copy as he writes it. He has trained his mind to work in terms of sound rather than sight. This helps simplify his writing. Learning to hear your copy as you write is a difficult but valuable knack in radio writing. The best way to develop this ability and the surest way to determine whether your oral copy is listenable is to read it aloud. If you have used words or word sequences that are hard or awkward to read, or

if you find yourself running out of breath, you can be sure the presenter will have similar difficulties. So to simplify your writing, read it aloud as you write it.

It is important to follow this advice when writing for the ear. Direct your writing at a 90-year-old grandmother who is half deaf. This will help you select words that are easy to hear. Also direct your writing at a 9-year-old to enable you use words and expressions that are easy to understand. But you must sound intellectual enough so that the 40-year-old executive will listen. If you can combine these three elements in your writing, you will be off to a good start on writing for the air. Wimer et al (1969.61).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

What are the benefits of hearing what you write?

3.4 Warming Up the Listener

Warming up the listener is almost a headline technique. It does the same thing as the headline by giving a fact or two as a summary of what is to follow. According UPI, don't try to write too much in your opening sentence. The listener requires a little time to get adjusted after each story. An attention getting opener that sells the write up to the listener at the outset will keep his interest; make him want to hear more. We have two types of warm ups viz: the generalized warm up where there is a generic statement with specific facts following. Another one is the interpretative warm up that is an interpretational round up of several items grouped into one write up. The use of warm up in broadcast writing is determined by each writer with respect to each individual programme. As a writer, you will learn to use the warm up effectively only through experience. The philosophy behind warm ups and broadcast writing that the listener may not actually "hear" those first few words. The oral writer is faced with the problem of getting the listener's full attention without jamming into those first few words.

To meet this problem, experienced radio/TV writers frequently use the warm up method of telling the listener to come awake and listen closely. Consequently therefore, the first sentence of a broadcaster write up should:

(i) Catch the listener's attention (ii) Orient him and prepare him for what is to follow.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Why is it necessary to warm up the listener?

3.5 Writing to Pictures

Right from the outset of this Unit, we have lumped radio and TV writing under the oral style. This is generally correct because both are written for the ear. However, TV writing presents a peculiar task because there must be a fusion between pictures and words. In creating this fusion between words and pictures, the TV writer runs into problem of moving his audience from topic to topic. A typical TV viewer has three difficulties viz: (i) seeing the picture (ii) Hearing the words (iii) Translating the picture and the words into a general understanding of the topic. Writing to the picture requires a very specialized skill. You will write to cues. In other words, you will write for periods when viewer will be seeing only the presenter and for periods when viewers will be seeing only the picture. You must be aware of the condition between pictures and sound for the viewer's attention when the camera is on the presenter writer in a way that words will dominate. But when the camera is on the picture you will write to subordinate the words. Writing to the picture cannot be taught by formula. It can't be standardized. You will learn it only by writing to many pictures on many different situations. You can get a good deal of realistic training by clipping still pictures, organizing them into sequence or montage and writing to them. According to Wermer (1969.199), it is hard to tell you how to write to pictures. Many of the professionals themselves cannot tell you just how they do it because it is more of feeling.

Below are some few advice from professionals:

- Before you write your scripts, try to see the picture or film. If this is not possible then you write entirely from a spot sheet listing scenes order.
- Best procedure is to cue the words as closely as possible to the picture.
- Write to the picture but try to avoid mentioning the picture by avoiding expressions like "seen here", "shown here", "here we see" it is better to describe what the viewer is seeing with as few references to the picture as possible.

- Write your script to exact time limit as specified by your station. Normally for a programme of 30 minutes, you are expected to script for 25 minutes.
- In tackling the question of which terms to use, it is important to note that you use the logical terms. Use the terms that best fit the situation.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

List the advice from professional oral writers.

3.6 Common Errors to Avoid

- A bull is red-headed, but a secretary is red-haired.
- Something is unique, but not very unique or most unique
- He was graduated from University, will be graduated, is to be graduated, not he graduated, will graduate is to graduate.
- Injured refers to a person; damage refers to objects.
- A resolution is adopted while an ordinance is passed.
- Don't say a person broke his arm unless he did so deliberately.
- A person doesn't sustain a fatal injury, receive is better. Sustain means to bear up under.
- An event that has not been arranged or planned occurs while preplanned event like wedding, a party or a conference takes place and death occurs.
- Who refers to persons which to animals, things or ideas. That refers to person, animal, things or ideas.
- Mrs. Jones is the widow of John Jones, not the late John Jones.
- A person died of AIDS, not from AIDS.
- Collective nouns generally take singular verbs and neuter gender
- Heart diseases is an ailment of the heart; heart failure is what occurs everytime anybody dies.
- Trials verdicts should be reported as acquittals or convictions instead of guilty or not guilty. Also he pleaded innocent, or pleaded guilty, not, pleaded not guilty.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 6

How do we use WHO, WHICH, and THAT on oral copy.

3.7 Punctuation Marks

The punctuation is essential in oral writing because it helps the presenter. The Radio and TV writer, then, punctuates for the man or woman at the microphone not for the public. Most common punctuation marks in oral writing are the period, comma and dash.

According to AP, it is grammatically correct to write – John Smith, Junior, was elected. But it is not good oral writing, because the natural way to say it is – John Smith Junior was elected – without pausing before and after Junior. For the same reason it is not necessary to write – Robert Brown, of Benin, died today. It is better to leave out both commas. Because if the announcer read it that way, he would say – Robert Brown (pause) of Benin (pause) died today.

Remember that as an oral writer, you use punctuation only where you want the presenter to follow directions.

PERIODS

The period marks the end of a sentence, though it calls for a pause or change of pace. More periods are used in oral writing than in newspaper writing. This is because the presenters prefer shorter sentences and because the period takes the place of the colon.

COMMAS

The comma calls for a shorter pause than does a period. But do not use it unless you want the presenter to pause for effect.

DASH

The dash in radio is a double hyphen - - it is frequently used as a substitute for other punctuation marks indicating a pause or parenthetical matter. It is intended to help the presenter use his voice to the best advantage in oral presentation. It is used to call for a longer pause than comma.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The broadcast media have the glamour that have made many people in society to depend on it for information and entertainment. Because of peculiar nature, write the oral copy depend some special skills which we have tried to discuss in this unit. This area of mass media writing is a popular area because of the high level of

awareness in society. Broadcast technology is advancing so much and it is posing a lot of challenges to oral writing.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we have dealt with the oral style of writing and the necessary skills needed to succeed in oral writing by looking at the following, the oral style manual, approaches to oral writing, understanding common errors to avoid, etc.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. How do we handle the following in oral writing – Abbreviation; Names and Titles, Quotations and Numbers?
- ii. How and why must we warm up oral listeners?
- iii. List and discuss professional advice on writing on pictures?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 PRINT STYLE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Characteristics of the Print Media
 - 3.2 Information Presentation Styles in Print
 - 3.3 The Place of Pictures in Print Writing
 - 3.4 Members of the Print Family
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Print media are newspapers, magazines, posters, brochures, and books – anything you read. Writing and reading requires a conscious effort. Print is concrete and permanent. Readers can reread anything they don't understand the first time, or return for reference. Prints can be illustrated with pictures and graphics. In print, the deliberate production processes required for the finished job preclude speed. You cannot write for a magazine as fast as you can for Newspaper or a poster as fast as you can a flyer. Good print writing style dictates that a print writer learns to exploit the different forms of print media to the best advantage.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the characteristics of the print media
- discuss information presentation styles in print
- discuss the place of photos in print writing
- identify the print audience

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Characteristics of the Print Media

Having explained briefly the print media above, it is now time to explain in details the features and characteristics of the print media and how the influence the writing style for the print media. Below are some of the characteristics of the print media.

- **Permanent:** Unlike the broadcast media that is transit and fleeting, the print menu is permanent. That is the reader has the opportunity of material recall and rereading for better understanding. It is important to add that magazine has the highest life span in the print family. The implication of this permanent nature of the print media is that it approves of a style that can afford to elongate articles and even the use of high sounding words since the reader can keep the paper aside and go for his dictionary and come back to meet the paper. Unlike in broadcast, it follows from the above discussion that the print media have permanence, it is concrete, it has recall value and it involves less speed and not as flexible as broadcast.
- **Detail:** Print details are more detailed than those of broadcast. Broadcast is said to give the readers the ‘first test’ while the prints media give readers the ‘most test’. The print is able to do that because it has longer production deadline which permits better treatment of stories, better research, as well as use of informational graphics such as maps, tables, charts, pictures, graphs and other illustrations.
- **Delayed:** Print stories are usually delayed. Unlike in broadcasting where there is opportunity for live transmission, print does not have such opportunities. All presentations and stories are first covered, processed, and printed. These stages involve some elements of delay, because time is consumed in the process.
- **Financial Outlay:** Any media consumer who wants to be part of the print presentation must be ready to part with some amount everyday. Newspapers and magazines usually have cover prices that the reader must be ready to part with to possess them.
- **Geographically Bound:** Unlike broadcast that is ubiquitous, print is geographically limited. That is, it can be physically checked. Also, the consumer most of the time leaves the house in order to get them. Unlike broadcast signals that are right there in your room as long as you have your receiving set.

The major type of newspapers includes:

- **Daily Newspapers:** Are published everyday. They use the present tense and fresh in style and involve a high degree of speed in writing style and production.
- **Weekly Newspapers:** These are published every week and their writing style and production are more relaxed than that of Dailies.
- **Community Newspapers:** Community newspapers are rural based and specialized in grassroots information dissemination. Their writing style is not as sophisticated like the Dailies.
- **National/International Newspapers:** National newspapers are those that cover the entire country with their circulation while the international newspapers are globalize in outlook. The implication in writing style and production is that the international newspapers must be packaged in a language understandable in the country it circulates. Magazines are generally of two types namely, general interest and specialized magazines. The general interest magazines do not discriminate in content selection while the specialized magazine does.

Informational graphics as we listed above perform the following functions in news papering

1. They help the assimilation of the stories.
2. They encourage readability.
3. They help to break gray matters.
4. They contribute to effective page planning.
5. They are used as make up components.

The following guidelines should be used when writing print copy:

1. Try as much as possible to gather more information than required.
2. Don't be too simplistic.
3. De-emphasis the use of past tense to avoid your story looking stale.
4. Always cross check your stories before submission.
5. Insure that your story is balanced by identifying the parties involved.

Finally, use these guidelines for composing effective e-mail stories for newspapers and magazines.

- Avoid using all capital letters called shouting in online journalism.
- Limit each e-mail story to one topic and identify that topic in the subject line.
- State only the necessary background information in the story.
- Keep your email stories short.
- Always check e-mail stories to make sure they are free from grammatical spellings and typographical errors.
- Personalization: You need to know the customers you serve. Some people do not respond well to technology and want the human touch in their dealings. In some cases, it is critical to have a written record of your online stories.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

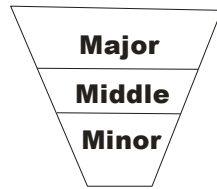
Discuss the characteristics of the Print Media.

3.2 Information Presentation Styles in Print

Various methods are used to present information in the print media. Prominent among the presentational formats are:

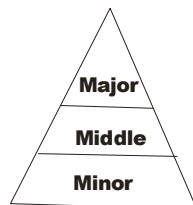
- **Inverted Pyramid Presentation Format:** It is the traditional form of information packaging for the print media. It is a practice of crowding as much information as possible into the first paragraph. The basic 5 Ws and H has been fundamental to media writing and are usually addressed up there as quick as possible. It is assumed in print writing style that if a writer can provide answers to what he is writing about or happening, who are the people or person he is writing about, where what he is writing about happened, when the event or activity took place, why the event occurred and how it happened, he has written a complete piece. This presentational format is favored for the following reasons:
 - It facilitates reading
 - It satisfies curiosity of readers
 - It facilitates make-up
 - It facilitates headline writing

(These need further oral explanation)



The presentational method is highly recommended for newspapers and poster writing.

- Pyramid Style of Presentation:** In this presentation method, the writer takes his time because he believes that the reader also has time or will make out time. According to MacDougal (1980:98), this is the format used for essay, poetry, drama, novel and short story. Whereas the authors of these other form of composition usually begin with minor or incidental details and work to a climax near or at the end of their write up. This method makes editing more tasking. It is highly recommended for magazine writing or article writing for weekend newspapers because it is believed that the readers have the time to go through the whole hob.



SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

What is the benefit of inverted pyramid style of writing?

3.3 The Place of Pictures in Print Writing

Illustrated reporting or press has been with us since 1850s. Bittner (1980:146). Initially papers not accustomed to using pictures became conditioned to new layout styles. For the print family, the stretch and pictures demanded for a composition are different from the columns. Photo journalism which has been described as writing with pictures has emerged as a force in print writing style or process. The invention of the halftone brought pictures to mass communication.

There are two classes of pictures that are used in print to share meaning. There are:

- Photo journalism – action-pictures. Its relevance is on its alertness, action and naturalness.
- Aesthetic Pictures: The essence of this type of picture is its beauty. That is it is used to enhance the physical appearance of the page.

You are expected to write editorial captions for these pictures. It has been observed that a combination of pictures and words increases the assimilation of write-ups. Some photo journalists are under the misconception that they don't have to deal with the written word. But they must take down the basic who, what, where and when about the photos because they may be the only representative of the news organisation on the scene.

3.4 Members of the Print Family

Newspapers: They are served daily to the reading mass media public. It, therefore, requires a lot of writing and speed. A Newspaper writer must be somebody who functions well under pressure. High level of concentration is needed to be able to write and beat deadline. The deadline syndrome appears to be more acute with news papering.

- **Newspapers and their writers epitomise the haste that journalism writing is known for:** This writing style is suitable for newspaper because of the nature of information processing for newspapers publication and the nature of a typical newspaper reader. Sometimes pure and erudite English Language scholars and teachers frown at what they call the loose or relaxed nature of newspaper writing. And the writers defend their action by claiming that newspapers are articles of trade that must be sold at the market and what the consumer likes is supreme in the market place. As far as they are concerned, newspapers' method is acceptable to the readers. Secondly, they contend that the method communicates with little room for misinformation and other communication barriers that make assimilation difficult and communication breakdown possible. By their very outlook, newspapers are sensational by nature.
- **Magazine:** They are usually published at intervals. It, therefore, exerts less pressure on the writer unlike newspapers. Because of its relaxed writing style, the writer

of magazine appears to be more colourful in writing and presentation. Usually the quality of paper used in printing the magazine is higher than that of newspapers.

- Newsletters are one of the mediums that print writers use. They are a message-oriented communication tool, to convey news and information at regular intervals. Commercial newsletters are as diversified as personal investors or as specific as public relations practitioners.
- **Posters and Brochures:** These are publicity publications designed to call attention to something like product, service, event or someone. Generally, their graphics are as important as their words, because they must get readers involved in something they don't have to read or may not even have a particular interest in reading. The content is always persuasive, written to get you to think or do something. As a poster/brochure writer, you must learn how to use display type faces and actions – pictures to attract attention to the content.
- **Books and Pamphlets:** Pamphlets are really mini-books, different from brochures in that their graphics may not always be especially interesting. As a writer, you count more on the audience to get involved simply because of the subject matter. The same is true for books, although paperbacks writers count heavily on their packaging the cover design, to sell the content. Newood et el (1988:7)

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

List the members of the print family.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The print medium is one of the oldest channels of mass communication in the world. The print style of writing has some unique features that make re-reading possible. Apart from words, the style encourages the use of pictures to communicate. Success in print style demands that the writer must be conversant with the various component parts of the print fairly and how to start or write in a way applicable to them.

5.0 SUMMARY

The print style has an outstanding feature of being permanent in nature. It also has unique information presentation style and makes provision for pictures and seeks to understand its audience.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Discuss the differences between Newspapers and magazine.
- ii. Identify and discuss the features and types of pictures we use in print.
- iii. Compare and contrast pyramid and inverted pyramid style.

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UNIT 4 ADVERTISING STYLE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Audience
 - 3.2 Media and Supplies
 - 3.3 The Copy Writer and Style
 - 3.4 Elements of Ad Copy Appeal
 - 3.5 The Creative Element
 - 3.6 Format and Style
 - 3.7 Constraints to Advert Copy Writing
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As an advertising copy writer, you have a highly different process. Your assignment comes from your employers, whether you are working for a company organizing the advertising, an agency handling advertising for a client or a news medium handling the advertising, print and broadcast commercial message in the mass media run in purchased space and time.

As an advertising writer, your obligation is to capture attention and to persuade someone to think something or to buy something. Your responsibility to those who are information consumers is to practice the art of persuasion ethically so that no one is misled. The media monitor their advertising content carefully and have standard for what they will present to their audiences and to prevent running foul of APCON (Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria) regulations.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- list the expectations of Ad audience
- discuss media and suppliers
- write Ad copies
- discuss creative thinking in relation to Ad writing.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Audience

They are the key to how messages are written and delivered through any medium. Generally speaking, the audience perceives media as fulfilling seven functions according to Newson et al (1988: 18-19):

- To provide information about the availability of products and services
- To entertain
- To inform on product
- To educate through in-depth piece
- To serve as a watch dog of public
- To promote
- To provide a forum for ideas, e.t.c.

As a writer, you must remember these expectations in fulfilling the purpose of your writing. You also must keep in mind how audience will use the medium for which you are writing. As a writer, you must put yourself in the audience's place to help you meet its expectation. Furthermore, you have to offer information valuable to that medium's audience. It is up to you to research on who is using a medium and why so that you can start properly. One of the attitudes you must imbibe as an advertising writer is empathy. The empathic writer imagines being on the receiving end of the message which helps in selecting facts and deciding which one to emphasize which to omit and how to arrange them for clarity. Developing a sense of empathy will help you bypass the trap of stereotyping. It is important to know that the background an audience brings to a news story or to a commercial message affect that presentation considering the educational level of the audience means deciding the kind of language to use, the amount of explanation needed and the impact the message is likely to have. Taking education into consideration does not mean talking down to audience; it only means talking differently to them. Your anticipation of what the audience will bring to the story affects the presentation.

The mass media have been accused of preparing materials for the lowest level in order to reach the largest segment of the audience.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Why is it important to do audience analysis?

3.2 Media and Supplies

The market research should show which media the target audience (TA) use, but you the writer should also know how those audiences related to those media. In order to write for the media, you must understand that newspapers get generally less second experience reading than magazine. A person looks at a newspaper and puts it aside, not to be looked at again, unless something comes to mind that needs to be referred to. But a magazine may be read piece meal and stays around as long as the person is still reading his or her way through it. The person listening to radio probably is doing something else, and isn't likely to have pencil at hand to write a name or phone number, nor is that sort of information likely to be recalled. However, the setting of TV in the home or office, generally means pen or pencil is available, so an address or phone number can be shown on the screen. As a writer, you are supposed to know which media are most credible, too, because that affects how copy is handled.

In addition to knowing audience response to and use of media, you should be knowledgeable about the demands of the media. Each type of print media has specific format requirements, so do broadcast. You the writer will be expected to have some knowledge of these format specifics and to know where to get the additional information. Likewise you are expected to understand the media and supplies. How should copy be marked to be sent to the typesetters, and know something about the production process, how corrections are made and their cost implication?

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

What are the benefits of market research?

3.3 The Copy Writer and Style

As a media writer with specialty in advert writing what you must know is begin an advertising writing stlye falls into seven categories.

- What is the purpose for the advert? What does the client want the audience to do: buy a product, gain additional information, and make a change or vote for a candidate?
- What is the persuasive strategy to accomplish this purpose? What is being offered in terms of an appeal or incentive, a mild threat or unfavorable comparison? What is likely to

work best for that audience, and in the medium being used to deliver the message? How can the purpose be accomplished?

- What is the best writing approach for the audience? What language is most appropriate? This may depend on educational background and age and it may be related to experience with the products or similar ones. What you should write or say to someone buying a product for the first time is different from how you would write to someone who is conversant with the product.
- How well will the medium deliver the message you need? You know that if you are trying to talk about a complex subject in a medium, like TV, you will have to go with images, not facts as the medium just won't accommodate a long, detailed message. You need to be sensitive to the various elements in print and TV. The words and arts must complement, enhance each other, not compete and distract.
- How accurate is every single detail? How flexible can you be with the company and still be accurate? Not only do you have responsibility to the audience, but there are legal concerns. How many ways can you state the terms of warranty, or what a product will and won't? it is risky to run false advertising.
- Can you make a special creative use of a medium? Can you design an advert that is so different that it becomes a record setter? You mustn't think only in terms of what is in vogue; what is your contribution?
- What overall effect is the advert you prepare likely to have? How does it fit into the other part of the advertising campaign? You have to know what the rest of the advert looks like.

Knowing all these, where do you start writing your advert? You have to examine the elements of advertising copy appeals and determine your approach to satisfy each.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

List the basics of advert style writing.

3.4 Elements of AD Copy Appeal

Five types of advertising copy appeals have been identified viz attention, self-interest, desire, credibility and action. Let us look at them one by one.

- The first requirement is to capture the attention of your target audience. If you don't accomplish that, nothing else you do matters. You can use headlines or sound effects or animation for attention getting.

Second, you figure out how you can appeal to self interest. People do things for their reasons, not yours. It is important you know what their reasons might be for doing what the advert is supposed to cause to happen. People always watch out for what is in there for them.

Also, you want the reader to become absorbed in the "how-to" of the advert. The first sentence of the body copy not only must fulfill the promise of the headline, it must entice the audience to receive the rest of the message and whet the desire for what is being advertised.

Credibility is crucial to the message at this point. If in making the offer or the appeal you waffle or hedge, you will lose your audience. You have to be part of the message needs to be successful because as direct and open as possible to be convincing. This is because your audience may not act right away. You need to build a residue of belief to be reinforced by subsequent messages for more success.

Finally you want the audience to take the action that is the intent of the advertising. Action is how most advertising is measured for its effectiveness, even though most advertisers know that repetition of message, a cumulative effect, is what is really likely to get action. You have to approach each advertising copy writing assignment the way an editorial writer approaches an editorial.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

List and explain the elements of advert copy appeal.

3.5 The Creative Element

Because words are so critical in advertising, you need to develop creative thinking skills. Much native creativity is supposed during our development in structural learning situations and has to be teased back to the surface. Native creativity means in born or bio-genic threats or qualities that is what makes an individual unique. Creativity can be honed by learning to make unusual associations. To horn means to sharpen or to train to perfection while unusual association means a trial and error method of combining things for a new idea. To improve this skill, write out the key words and you may find some unusual association that will keep you out of the trite trap.

Another creative training device is learning to make the common place exotic by stretching the imagination. Associative ideas come from lifetime experiences, listening to and observing and learning from them, and being exposed to music literature, theater, painting, etc. Once the idea is there, the next choice is deciding what to show, what to tell and what to leave to the audience's imagination. Associative ideas means frame of reference that is, experiences that are in line with our world outlook or expectation or life dream. This requires some creative thinking too. You have to decide what is best represented by art and what by words. You have to determine what can be left unsaid and yet be understood. Sometimes the medium and not the product determines the emphasis in radio for example, words are the pictures.

The choice of symbols – words, music, art, action, characters, is a careful mix. Words can be almost neutral so as to distract, or they can blend in delicately. They can strongly reinforce or they can dominate. The choice has to be carefully calculated.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

What do you understand by the creative elements?

3.6 Format and Style

In print, you first begin with a rough layout of the advert measured precisely to size. Block is how much space the art is going to take, and then blocking the headline space. The size of the space and the size of type you think you will need to be effective will determine how many words you can use. Think of the space as an empty slot. You are going to insert something in the slot that must fit. Write

the headline on a separate sheet because it will be set on a different machine from the body copy. And it must be properly marked.

On the layout, the headline and body copy are represented with straight lines or bars. The copy block represents the amount of space you can fill with words. If one size and typeface are used throughout, you can put the body copy on one sheet. But chances are this won't be the case. Therefore you mark in the layout all copy that is to be set the same differently from others that will be set in different sizes. You will also have to mark a space for a logo on the layout. Once all items are in place, the layout is sent for production, where it will be prepared for the printing process. When it comes back, it will be your job to check to be sure everything was set exactly the way you wrote the copy, with every "I" dotted, literally, and every punctuation mark in the right place. For this reason, always keep a copy of what you have written.

In writing any broadcast copy, remember that you are writing for two audience, not one. The announcer or actor is your first audience, the other one is the listening/viewing public. Broadcast commercials are written as scripts. Directors, producers, music and sound effects people, actors, all will be working from this script.

In terms of style, all adverts follow six general styles, sometimes according to purpose:

- **Humour:** Advertising messages are still being presented to get a smile, a chuckle or a good laugh. Some humorous appeals have a limited audience. In international campaigns, the humour used has to be sensitive to the culture of the societies where it will be seen. For these reasons, many advertisers are cautious about using a humorous appeal.
- **The Hard Sell:** The copy is direct, repetitive, often fast paced and hard-hitting.
- Information advertising comes with higher-priced items, especially ones that are technical like computers.
- Testimonial advertising is in between the hard sell and the informative.
- Endorsement advertising is seen during political campaigns, but it's also occasionally used for products. This form has some strict regulations. The person endorsing really has to be voting for the user or candidate or actually using the

product. In America, there is a law to put an end to endorsements by celebration of products that they had never touched.

- Institutional advertising is sometimes called image or idea advertising. Image adverts are those that try to help an audience see the institution as it wants to be seen.
- Another aspect of advertising writing job is the public service announcements PSA's for non-profit organisation can take the form of humour, hard sell, informative or image.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 6

List the components and importance of layout

3.7 Constraints to Advert Copy Writing

Occasionally media organisation will refuse an advert because they consider it in poor taste. Constraints on advertising are Laws, or directives about tastefulness.

They are of two forms viz:

- **Government Regulations:** Advertising is regulated by the government through a number of agencies, including the Advertising practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), NAFDAC etc. But the primary regulatory body is APCON. It regulates the fairness of competition, unfair or deceptive trade practices and false advertising (Molokwu 2000:46)

The APCON's Bureau of Consumer Protection issues trade regulations rules that are legally binding. The Bureau also has an adverting evaluation section that reviews advertising on its own from samples it pulls and also responds to consumer complaints. When corrective advertising is ordered, APCON specifies the language to be used.

- **Self Regulation** – As a copy writer, it is important to know what sort of scrutiny your words will be under and by whom. The Better Business Bureau is the way the industries tries to handle its own regulations. Both the Advertisers' Association of Nigeria (ADVAN) and the Association of Advertising Practitioners of Nigeria (AAPN) are designed to monitor and look into consumer and industry complaints. If

they cannot get the advertiser to change policies, the case is turned over to the APCON.

As another form of internal control, the Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON) used to have a code of ethics to which its members adhered even with the deregulation of broadcasting in Nigeria. Furthermore, Advertisers on their own clear story boards or shooting scripts or both before airing. If demonstration or testimonial is involved, demonstration is usually provided when the script is submitted.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 7

Explain the role of APCON.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Advertising style of writing is new to media writing. But because of the important role advertising play in marketing and commerce, this style has become popular among media writers. In advertising style we not only use words but words that can attract, hold and push the reader to action. That is why sometimes the writing style is complex but if the processes are followed properly, the goals of advertising can be achieve.

5.0 SUMMARY

To advertise is to create awareness and call attention to something. In order to do this the writer must know audience expectation, his media supplies, creative thinking and the various constraints that he faces.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. How does the audience perceive the functions of advert?
- ii. List and discuss the various constraints an advert writer faces.
- iii. What is the creative element and why is it important in packaging an advert.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 5 PUBLIC RELATIONS STYLE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Qualities of a PR Writer
 - 3.2 PR Writing Source
- 3.3 Writing the News Releases
 - 3.4 Packaging the Media Kits
 - 3.5 The PR Contact, Restraints and Relationship
 - 3.6 Terminology
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Public relations writing do appear as part and parcel of the mass media presentations although most of it is done for specialized media, such as a trade, association, employer and audio-visual production. Whether mass or specialized media, though, public relations writing involves structures and styles outlined in this unit. Also public relations are one of the principal sources of information published or broadcast in the media. Although there are claims that public relations information are controlled.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify the qualities of a public relation writer
- list the sources of public relations writing
- write the news release
- package media kits.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Qualities of a PR Writer

The PR person goes through the same research process as any writer, gathering information from primary and secondary sources. However, the PR writer must play the role of reporter within an

organisation in order to furnish materials both inside and outside the organisation.

Besides being a skillful fact-finder, the PR writer becomes a masterful rewriter. One collection of facts often serves the PR writer for proportioning a backgrounder, (a summary of all research findings), a briefing (for breaking news) or a position paper (presenting the organisation) stand on a controversial matter, Newson et al (1989:264). From this accumulation of materials, the PR person draws a wide variety of writings. As a public relation writer, you are responsible for all the other writing chores of the organisation, from letter and memos to the annual reports. PR writer must know the technicalities of all different tasks and prepare suitable materials. And you must know the appropriate writing styles for all media and follow them in preparing copy. However, it generally means the evenhanded representation of all sides of an issue that is expected from a typical news-writer.

Furthermore, a public relations writer must have more control over his/her materials than other mass media writers because his/her organization generally is originating the information.

Also as a public relations writer, you must exhibit the skills of an editor. You have control not only the substance but also the form of information from your organisation. This is especially true of PR writer in the broadcast area. Public Relations writing can be tasking and heavy for green public relations people, some of whom may start as publicists for the organisation. In a public relations agency, the writers are part of the creative department and work with the senior-level official of the agency. As a publicist you write what is given to you to prepare in whatever form necessary, you have no control over policy.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

List and explain the qualities of a Public Relations Writer.

3.2 PR WRITING SOURCES

It has been stated that much of mass media writing, originates from public relations people, most especially in the following situations:

- **The Assignment:** When reporters are on assignment, their contacts are often PR people. The news sources of most government business and cultural officers are public information or public affairs people, whose job are in the PR

category. Public officials and corporate officers generally rely on their PR professionals to provide information to print and broadcast stations. The public everyday expects news from the PR.

- **The Mass Media:** Well trained PR experts know the news values of the different media and understand how to prepare information to meet their technical requirements. They also learn which reporters are reliable. Reporters, too, learn which PR sources can be trusted to perform professionally. With a large percentage of news being supplied or stimulated by public relations sources, the job of reporting requires such sources effectively. On any given day, a reporter is deluged with mailed releases, business wire copy, telephone calls and messages from public relation contacts. In addition, already marked on the calendar for coverage is a news conference or special events managed by a PR person. Not all of them are accurate, responsive and responsible anyway, any more than all reporters are fair and accurate in their coverage. With the high level of writing skills exhibited by PR writers, reporters need to know how to extract and derive the best from PR sources and are obligated to be accurate and responsible in turn in order to get the best co-operation from them. If the two don't co-operate, the real loser are the media audience, who are deprived of information.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

What are the sources of PR writing?

3.3 Writing the News Releases

In writing a news release for the mass media, the public relations person is going to present the information in a way that serves the organisation. This can mean being up front, even first, with a story of a problem or a crisis. The media rely on news releases when writing an advance, covering an event, speeches and meetings. The PR people are the first to know about the plans their organisation is making. When the plans are complete enough for a story, they write one and distribute it to the news media. Some PR people also write coverage stories that resemble news stories for the media to draw from. Most PR people generally prepare a follow up story which can be used by the media to flesh out their own coverage. A straightforward, well written advance by a PR person usually

doesn't need major rewriting. If it passes the newsworthiness test, it generally gets used as is, with minor editing for style.

Some PR write ups can simply be announcement. In order to make his write up news worthy, it is necessary that PR writer when writing to the addresses the following questions – Is the information significant to the public. How many readers could benefit from it? Is the story timely? Is the story local or does it have some local impact? Do the people involved in the story mean anything to the readers? However, editors always use caution in handling news releases because of the chances of self- serving distortion in news release. Experience has shown that some releases fail to tell the whole story, especially, in times of controversy. Time restrictions are sometimes placed on a release like Hold for Release: Date, Time. Responsibility is always to the consumers of information, both for the PR people and the reports and editors. The reporter's primary responsibility is to be sure information given out is as accurate, fair and complete as possible. A PR person has the responsibility to be honest and corporate, but often is constrained by top management or legal counsel from making sure information available.

Finally in packaging news releases for the mass media, it is important to know that:

- It must have date of release
- It must be signed with the officer's designation, etc.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

What are news releases and how is it written.

3.4 Packaging the Media Kits

Both print and broadcast outlets get their share of media kits. Media kits are the standard tool of most PR professionals. These vary in content with the situation. However, most kits contain a fact sheet, biographical sketches of the major personalities involved, a straight news story, news column materials, a news feature, a brochure and, in some cases, photographs. A prominent part of a media kit is the fact sheet. There may even be two fact sheets. One has the basic information about the organisation and the event or occasion for the media kit; the other can be historical, noting milestones in the event or the organisation itself. These often serve as story ideas for reporters. The idea of a media kit is to provide the mass media a compact file or kit of items, information,

picture concerning an event that the media has been invited. The PR Unit of the organisation organizing an event is responsible for writing or packaging the materials on the kit and making same available to the various media stations.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

List the elements of a media kit.

3.5 The PR Contact, Restraints and Relationship

PR people are often the spoke persons for their organisation and are quoted as such by the mass media. They are also suppliers of news tips and feature ideas. All PR people are subject to the control of their employers and a natural adversary relationship springs up between the PR person and the mass media, because in a democratic society, the news media acts as watch dogs. In Europe in the middle ages, society was rightly divided into three estates “The nobility, ‘consumers’ and ‘clergy’”. The press was separated into yet another category, the fourth estate. There has been what I call an interface between the PR writer and the mass media. The adversary relationship is a function of their background. What the PR person swept under the carpet and forgotten is what is needed by the media as fresh, juicy and newsworthy. But not all relationships are adversarial. In many, perhaps most, instances these relationships are quite friendly. In fact PR people in both the public and private sectors can be of great assistance to the news media in a number of ways.

PR writers make information available to the mass media so a deadline can be met. The PR office makes the background material available to the media. He will supply photograph, coverage interviews and get you access. Features stories with a PR that appear in the mass media usually are prepared by news staff writers.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Discuss the PR/Press interface.

3.6 Terminology

Although the following terms are generally understood between reporters and PR sources, what any words really means in a given situation should be spelled out.

- Off the record: means that the information is for the writer's general understanding and not to be reported in any form.
- Background only: Means that information may be reported but not attributed to the source.
- Not for direct quotation means that information may be reported and the source named, but the writer must paraphrase, using neither quotation marks nor the official's exact words.

The problem, a misunderstanding about terms can create are described by Riven (1965: 37). According to him too often, officials who actually intend to offer information for "background only" will say, "This is off the record" or "Don't quote me directly". Some who wants to speak "off the record" says, "This is background only" is thinking that the writers will not report the information but will use it only for their background understanding of issues.

To clarify the matter further, Moyers (1968) offers the following guidelines.

1. Backgrounders should be designed to explain policy rather than announce policy. This rule would discourage the use of unauthorized quotations.
2. Backgrounders in subject other than national security and foreign affairs should be the exception rather than the rule.
3. The contents of a group backgrounder should not be disclosed for at least one hour after the conclusion of the session. This would permit time for cross-checking.
4. The rules should be clearly stated before the background begins by the principal or by the press spokes person.
5. There should be only two levels of concealment. Either the reporter uses the information on his own or it should be attributed as stated in the following principles.
6. The source should be identified by the specific agency the loose anonymity of "high Nigerian Official", "top government officials", friends of the president", etc. would be replaced by "a Defense Department spokes person" or Nigerian Army Official or "Aso Rock Source".
7. When a public official in a backgrounder refuses to permit attribution of materials that is patently self-serving but reporters nonetheless feel obliged to carry the story, they should carry a sentence attributing the information to a state or government house official "whose name is withheld at his insistence.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 6

When do we use “off the record” and “backgrounders”.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Public relations writing, like Advertising writing, is new to media writing. Public relations is aimed at establishing and sustaining mutual relationship between an organisation or a person and its publics. This can be done through various means. The writing style applicable to public relations is sentimental and emotional in nature. A public relations writer must be a student of human nature.

5.0 SUMARRY

The task of establishing and sustaining mutual understanding between people and organisation is not an easy tasks. It entails that the writer must have some qualities, understand his source, know how to write the various assignments, etc.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Write a news release announcing the launching of your organization’s new product.
- ii. How do you reconcile the public relations writing in the media reach?
- iii. Public relation writing demands certain qualities, list and discusses them.

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MODULE 2

Unit 1	Writing the Lead/Headlines
Unit 2	An Ear for Writing
Unit 3	Information Sources
Unit 4	Revising, Editing and Proofreading
Unit 5	Organizing the Facts

UNIT 1 WRITING THE LEAD/HEADLINES

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
	3.1 Definition and types of Lead
	3.2 Functions of Leads/Headlines
	3.3 Guides to Effective Lead/Headline Writing
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The first thing you will write for each story is the lead or introduction and the title or headline. The word lead is a newspaper jargon. It was developed as a specialized way of getting into the top of a newspaper story all the salient facts. The idea was to stop the reader and hold his attention by exciting him with a fact-filled first sentence.

Stressing the relevance of title or headline in an advertisement, David Ogilvy said that on the average, five times as many people read the headlines as read the copy. Okoro at el 2003:78. The relevance of titles/headlines is equally emphasized in all other aspects of media writing. The place of catchy and informative headlines and titles in selling the paper at the newsstand cannot be ignored. In composition, probably the most important rule you were taught was the rule of unity. This is the anchor of good media writing which keeps the reader on track.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the different types of leads
- enumerate the functions of leads/headlines
- identify the guides to effective lead/headline writing.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition and Types of Lead

The lead or the 'Intro' is the very first paragraphs of any media write up. Together with the title or headline, the lead begins a story and eases the reader into the main body of the story. Most times the extent the reader will go with the story depends on the lead. Trying to arouse or capture the reader's interest without a good lead is like fishing with a bare hook, (Okoro et al 2003:79). Proper lead construction demands a deep understanding of subject matter as a honed sense of perspectives. For the beginner, writing a good lead is a hard task but for the experienced writing the lead comes easily. This means that mastering the art of lead writing comes with constant writing.

Leads that are used in media writing are of various types and forms. And below are some of them.

- **Hard/Soft Lead:** The original intent of the newspaper lead was to crowd into the first sentence the 5w's and H of the story. This often resulted in long cumbersome overloaded sentences that even the most careful reader found confusing. This type of lead is tagged hard because readability was not taken into consideration. It was popular among print media journalists and it worked for them because of the permanent nature of print presentation which enables re-reading.

Broadcast writers were quick to recognize that this fact jammed lead was not suitable for the ear. The hard leads got too many important facts into the air too soon and beyond recall before listeners were ready to hear and understand those facts. So broadcast writers developed the soft lead the purpose of which is to catch the listener's attention and ease him into the story with a major fact or two, to prepare him for other facts which will follow. The philosophy of the soft lead is basic. The ear can hear and transmit to the brain only a certain number of signals within a given

time. The ear must be alerted and be prepared to hear these signals. The soft lead must be colourful enough to arouse the listener's interest. But it must not give so many facts as to confuse the listener and leave him confused throughout the story. The need for a soft lead in broadcast media writing is stressed by the fact that broadcast media frequently must compete with other activities for attention. The listener may be eating, drinking, driving, washing or reading, he listens only subconsciously until something the announcer says makes him sit up and want to hear more. The soft lead rings a bell to bring him alert. The lead warms up the listener of what he is about to hear but postpones presentation of certain important facts until the listener is really listening.

- **Others:** By others we mean the numerous types of leads which are too many to list all here. However, we have just selected some of them and their possible story application.
- **The Quotation Lead:** It is most applicable in writing about speeches and public statements and the like. It allows the writer the opportunity of authenticating the write up by starting with the exact words of the source. Example, "the emotionally disturbed child is the number one problem facing the Nigerian society today", Professor Nwosu, council of social welfare director said yesterday.
- **The Question Lead:** Journalists are known to ask and provide answers to issues. When the story concerns a problem of public interest or a matter likely to provoke debate among readers, it may be possible to obtain interest by means of a question lead. Example is it possible for a black man to win the presidency of the White house, and become the world's number one citizen? Barack Obama is proving that it is possible by consistently leading John McCain in all polls two days to general election.
- The Staccato lead is used when the time element is to be emphasized. It comprises a series of phrases, punctuated either by periods or dashes. Example, almost thirty-five years ago, -back in 1960-in a different area, in a different life, about forty years of happiness in her simple home, the light went off for Mrs. Jones of Benin City as she became stone blind. Years passed, thirty of them long and torturous- and suddenly her prayers were answered, and Mrs. Jones could see again.

- The Explosive lead is similar to staccato lead although its sentences are grammatically complete. It is best suited for feature article but can be used for straight news as well. Example, a cloudy and clement afternoon on Sunday, with nothing to do. On the west circular, two boys jumped on the back of a bus to hitch a ride. One of them snaps and hit his head and, died of fracture skull.
- **The Punch Lead:** It is similar to Cartridge lead but it is not so short, abrupt or definite. It is used for almost any kind of story. It has been called the “blind” lead because of its emphasis on situation rather than specific person or details. The policeman has been suspended on charges that he deserted his duty post. Placed on indefinite suspension, by the Police service commission was Friday Adeyemi, attached to the New Benin Police station.
- **The Contrast Lead:** Sometimes the feature of a story consists in the contrast between the immediate and a former situation or between the event at hand and another of which for any of a number of reasons, it is a reminder. Behind the same desk, which how used to dust as an office boy, Osagie Osunbor yesterday became the Director general of Nta.
- **The Descriptive Lead:** The feature or key to the spirit of a write up may be on its setting, in the physical appearance of person or objects or in an unusual phrase of the action with which it deals. In such cases, a graphic or descriptive lead is most effective to give the tone or feeling necessary to proper understanding and appreciation. You are advised to use it mainly for events you eye-witnessed yourself. Example, with lists in their hand, shopping bags on their arms and fire in their eyes, hundreds of thousands of Christmas shoppers are swarming through the exclusive thought as if no recession or financial crisis is in place.
- **The Figurative Lead:** Tritteness must be avoided in the use of metaphors, similes and other figures of speech, either in lead or in any other part of the write up. Many expressions have become so common through usage that they are hardly noticed by casual readers as figurative. Among them are “Ax to grind” “put all eggs in one basket” etc. You should allow its use to come naturally rather than deliberately. Cold, dirty water lapped and licked at Ring road Tuesday evening like a patient cat toying with a cornered mouse-this describe a potential flood.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

What are the weakness and strengths of the soft leads?

3.2 Functions of Leads/Headlines

There is need for mass media writing to be lifted out of some of their oldest ruts. Without adequate lead, there will likely be some level of intellectual dislocating in local and international media presentations. This is important among other reasons because we are in an era of globalization in which it is supremely vital to convey ideas and report the news so that basic truths may be better understood by more people globally.

It is not sufficient to report news alone, or simply to tell what people say or nations do. The meaning must be set forth and event must be set in perspective right from the lead. And it must be done fairly, expertly and thoroughly. A good lead puts a premium on the techniques of media writing. That is it ensures that:

- The write up is easy to read as it is interesting
- There is an expert organisation of the write up from the beginning down.
- It attracts an average reader or listener through clear, fair and balanced appearance.
- They summarize the news and other information.
- They attract the attention of the audience.
- They arouse the interest of the audience.

FUNCTIONS OF HEADLINES

Furthermore, proper headlining performs the following function to a write up:

- It identifies the story: This is important in this era of information explosion where an average reader or listener has a lot of things competing for his attention.
- It grades stories: This depends on the font size used for the headlines. Stories to be played up are usually in bigger font while those to be down played are cast in smaller fonts.
- It can kick start a story for the reader or it can provide a rider into the story.
- Beautification of the page: Headlines are used as one of the make up components to beautify a page by making it attractive to the readers.

- To sell a story: Through proper packaging of a new story, a headline can lead to the purchase of a newspaper.
- To index the content of the news story: To index means to graphically present a content of a news story in a way to enable readers select the ones they can read.

FUNCTIONS OF LEADS

1. They summarise the news or other information.
2. They attract three attention of the audience
3. They are used to arouse the interest of the audience.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

List and discuss two functions each, of lead and headlines?

3.3 Guides to Effective Lead Writing

The lead acts as the window or doorway into the write up. In writing it, it is important to avoid the following pitfalls:

- **Lead Clutter:** This means packing into the lead too many details. When you cram a lot of details into the lead, you make it impossible for the reader to understand the idea/information you are trying to communicate. The circumstances that led to the development and adoption of the lead as a media writing technique has change so lead writing must also change.
- Failing to make the lead a part of the feature by not linking it with the body of the piece. As we said earlier in this unit, Unity is important in writing the lead to avoid dislocation. Writing on the principles that can help media writer in framing their leads properly, Newson (1988:101-108) listed the following.
- **Be Brief:** The lead should be direct and to the point as details, will follow subsequently.
- **Be Specific:** the biggest fault to guide against in lead writing is vagueness. The lead must tell the reader exactly what the main point is.
- **Identify the News:** The lead must give the most newsworthy of the specific points; it must answer the reader's question.

- **Watch Questions and Quotation Leads:** while these can attract attention, they can also be pointless. The lead should give answers so don't pose a question unless it is the major problem.
- **Give Proper Attribution.** The desire for brevity sometimes causes writers to drop an attribution from a lead.
- **Be Timely:** Deciding what the news is in a story is a matter of judgment. Because the time element is so crucial in media writing, it is frequently included in the lead especially if the time is "today". The AP stylebook says it is okay to use "today" this morning, this afternoon, tonight", etc Yesterday" is a taboo to most editors especially in the lead.
- **Getting Started:** You better your lead writing skill by ordering the items for a lead in a physical list of the 5 W's and H. Examples include:
 - WHO: The President of Benson Idahosa University
 - WHAT: Goes into effect next session
 - WHEN: On all University property
 - WHY: New directive from CGM or Chancellor
 - HOW: Meetings with Potters, RSAs, Students Services etc

3.3 Guides to Effective Headline Writing

For effective headline writing, it is important to note the following guidelines.

- Be sure you understand a story by immersing yourself thoroughly in it.
- It is important you visualize the headlines in type. You will need to know these basic rules about readable typography. For instance, any type size under 10 points is hard to read. Also any headline printed in an unfamiliar type face is hard to read.
- There should be leading in the headline and lead arrangement. That is the white space.
- Headlines printed in capitals only are hard to read. It is easier to read headings in capitals and lower case letters. Particularly if printed in bold face.

STEPS TO WRITING HEADLINES

There are about four steps involved in writing and polishing headlines before publication:

- Read and immerse yourself thoroughly with the story.
- Edit the story properly by adding and subtracting. You add the things that are important and subtract the things that are not necessary or can bring legal action.
- Summarize the entire story in one sentence (focal sentence and news print) with a subject and a predicate.
- Use headline style. That is, presenting the story in present tense that will make it look fresh and in active verbs that will make it appear punchy.
- Keep eliminating words and substituting others till the headline fits.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

List and discuss the guidelines for lead/headline writing.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have explained that mass media writing relies on effective leads and headlines to succeed. The idea is that all media writings from News to feature to other assignments depend on proper leads and headlines. Experience has shown that they enhance the public acceptability and readability of media presentation.

5.0 SUMMARY

The lead and the headline are the door ways to the any write up published or presented in the media.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Why is effective Lead/Headline writing important in media writing.
- ii. List and discuss the guidelines for writing it.
- iii. Discuss types of Lead/Headlines.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Newson, D. *et al* (1988). *Media Writing; Preparing Information for the Mass Media*. California: Wadsworth Pub. Co.

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UNIT 2 AN EAR FOR WRITING

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Other People's Mind
 - 3.2 The Importance of Being Trivial
 - 3.3 Quotations Handling
 - 3.4 Organisation of Ideas for Shape
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Writing is a highly mental exercise fundamental to journalism as a profession. In fact journalists are literally known as writers in Igbo language. It will therefore be improper if this central requirement of journalism is handled anyhow. Writing is a skill that must be honed to perfection. One of the basic requirements for the development of this skill is the ability to develop an ear for writing. By this, we mean the application of one's mind, body and spirit to writing as a way of life. Those who live by writing and those who write to live must develop an ear for writing. In this Unit, we will study what it means to have an ear for writing, how to develop it and how to apply it. Most celebrated writers will tell you that they hear the sound of their story right from their head to the paper. This skill makes it much easier to write better. A writer who does not have an ear for writing hardly hears a good copy from a distant and can hardly put one in place.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Affects people positively with your writing
- discuss the importance of triviality in media writing
- organize an idea into meaningful writing shape.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Other People's Mind

During the Second World War when the Allies for the first time bombed Hitler's strong holds, the news was such sensational when reporters interviewed the successful Combat pilots. The reporters were surprised that neither the flight leader, nor presumably the pilots with him knew that Berchtesgaden was where Hitler had his principal home. A lot of people thought that in former USSR during the communist days everybody got the same pay, no matter what their job etc.

One reason for this may be that the average reader's picture of the world is somewhat lazy. This does not mean that the ordinary person didn't know. The simple explanation for all this is that people do not read enough to be well informed. According to newspaper surveys, they pay more attention to the comics than to anything else in the paper. In a study of over a hundred newspapers in America, it was found that only one news story in twenty-five is read by even half the readers. Dendebeg (1970:140).

Some people say that the trouble is that newspaper language is too high brow. We are not saying that people are morons. If a person doesn't know much, that doesn't necessarily mean he is unintelligent. After all, intelligence is the ability to learn. A media writer must be cautious in estimating the stock of information readers have and their intelligence. The thing to do, of course, is to find out what people know and what they don't know, and then to write accordingly. You must not take a great many things for granted. A media writer must constantly engage in research to find out what people know and what they need to be told. There is hardly anything more important for readable writing than the more you know about the kind of people you are writing for, the better you will write.

Naturally, it is not always possible to go into research studies and surveys. But a good estimate is better than nothing at all. Nowadays, lack of information usually goes hand in hand with little education and low income, so if you are writing for people in the low income brackets or a person who haven't gone to university it is a good guess that they won't have much background knowledge.

The amount of information is important, but it is not the only thing to consider. People can be classified in many other ways – most obviously by age and sex. You will have to write one way for

young people and another way for older people, one way for men and another way for women. According to Aristotle, young men have strong desire, they are fond of victory and they live their lives in anticipation. They have high aspirations, prone to pity and fond of laughter, Elder men are cynical, suspicious. They crave the mere necessities and comforts of existence, they live in memory rather than anticipation. What it means is that young people like romance, adventure, and daydreams, and old people like practical, down to earth stuff.

So when you write to convey information to young people, take a hint. Make it a story with a happy ending. Then of course, there is always the difference between the sexes. Remember that boys do better in mathematics, science etc and girls in so-called social intelligence.

Furthermore, most readers of burning news and sports are men and most readers of society pages and local news women. In other words, men love figures, gadgets and things, and women love talk, sentiments and people.

What it all amounts to is that everything you write has to be started toward your audience. That does not necessarily mean that the simpler version is always the better. It all depends on who you are writing for. When I say study your audience and start your writing toward it, I don't mean that you should write only what people want to read. Never mind writing what the public wants or what you suppose the public wants. Study your audience and then write what you want to say in the form that is most likely to appeal to them.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

How do age and gender influence your writing?

3.2 The Importance of Being Trivial

A media writer must always be in possession of a good stock of facts and there are ways and means of getting at facts and keeping them handy. Most people who do any writing are handicapped by simply not knowing how to collect their materials. For ordinary writing, it may be enough to have assembled your facts, for readable writing it is not. At the same time as you gather your facts, you must also get hold of two more things.

- First get your framework right
- Second get your verbal illustrations ready.

Your reader will need a firm framework and colourful verbal illustrations to enjoy and remember what you have written.

The framework – the slant, the angle will often become clear to you while you are taking notes on your facts. Usually, brilliant ideas are apt to be vague and fleeting, by the time you are through with taking notes, they have usually disappeared. That is why I am as well recommending putting these “fringe thoughts” down so that you have some record of them right among your notes. When your writing job reaches the stage of creative thinking, these seemingly irrelevant stray thoughts will be most valuable to you. Any device to nail them down is good.

What it comes down to is that you must concentrate on getting your facts, but not too hard. There is always the chance that your wandering mind will hit upon a good “angle” while you are researching.

The importance of good verbal illustrations is even greater. Your facts may be complete and convincing, but your reader would not remember than ten minutes afterwards if you haven’t bothered to find specific illustrations. Whenever you write about a general principle, show its application in a specific case, quote the way someone stated it, tell a pointed anecdote. These dashes of colour are what the reader will take away with him. Not that he will necessarily remember the illustration or anecdote itself, but it will help him remember the main idea.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

What are the requirements you need after getting your facts?

3.3 Quotations Handling

Of course direct quotations are the stock in trade of any good journalistic writing. Tracking down illustrative material and copying the exact words of quoted matter is often a nuisance, but it pays. Here is how a New York Times reporter uses it to point up pieces about a College Elementary School for Gifted Children.

A four-year-old child in the nursery class was asked what he does in school. He answered very simple. ‘I fight and take tests’. On one occasion, when a student teacher was trying to quiet some children during the rest period. In exasperation, she said to one of the 5year-olds, ‘if you don’t get quiet, I will send you back to your room’. To which the alert youngster corrected her: ‘you shouldn’t say that,

you should say, which do you prefer to get quiet or to get back to your room'. (Flesch, 1971:38).

These examples show how important it is to take note of the exact words in such verbal illustrations. The New York Times reporter could not have made his point effectively if he had not used the exact words that were used. In broadcast, handling direct quotation presents a special problem because; quotation marks cannot be seen by the listener. Therefore, the writer must have a way of letting the listeners know exactly when a direct quote starts and when it ends. The expression 'quote' and 'unquote' has been widely used but has become obsolete due to over use. Other expressions like 'as he put it....', 'he went on to say...'

Using Attributions Effectively

A newspaper's reputation for credibility is the best guarantee a reader has on the reliability of the information. Nevertheless, most authoritative publications are the most careful to attribute every important fact to some source. A smart reporter 'documents' his or her stories. Including authorities in the write-up adds emphasis, satisfies the reader's curiosity and partially protects the newspaper against criticisms. When the news consist in the fact that an announcement or comment has been made especially if it is one which has been expected for time for a long time, authority should be given the greatest emphasis possible by beginning the lead with it as in:

Inspector General of Police, Mike Okiro announces today charges of irregularities in the collection of business license fees by Customs department will be referred to the federal executive council.

When someone in public life makes an attack on another, the lead should begin with the persons name as in:

Senate President Izu Emmanuel today called president Hayford, a 'crackpot' and described his ten point agenda as "the wild idea of a neophyte in public life". It is the fact that senator Emmanuel attacked the president that is news, what he said is opinion unless he was much more definite. If he did make specific charges, then, there will be need to obtain the "other side". Caution must be exercised so as not to declare as certain something that is still a matter of debate or further official action. For example, a reporter in Benin erred when he wrote:

Benin City will have a 200million seater stadium by next year. Plans for this will be presented today to the state executive council. In this case, the state executive council disapproved the project.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

What are quotations and why do we quote?

3.4 Organisation of Ideas for Shape

Basic ideas, solid facts and good collection of seemingly useless information is not all that a media writer needs. It is important to organize all your information and ideas. This process is partly mental and partly mechanical. It is the gradual process of sorting your notes and more important, the facts and ideas in the head into classification. By the time you get the point where you could think through the whole mess, you are now ready to start planning the actual writing job. It means that as a good media writer, you must put in some hours of mental exercise to enable you get your ideas in shape for you to draw an outline. Seasoned professional writers assign a full work day or more to what amounts to just sitting and thinking. Every professional writer know that this period of just-sitting-and-thinking between leg work and outline is the most important part of the whole writing process. It is what makes a piece of writing what it is. You won't find anything about this in the textbooks.

According to psychology, our minds are operating just like our eyes or your camera, when it is looking at an object. To see the object clearly, you have to find the right focus, the right perspective, the right angle of vision. Only when all these things are taken care of do you really see what the object is like.

The same way, in your media writing, you must first go over your materials in your mind trying to find the focus, the perspective, and the angle of vision that will make you see directly the shape of whatever it is you are writing about. There has to be one part that is sharply in focus, and a clear grouping of everything else around it. Once you see this clearly, your reader will see it too. And that, the shape of your ideas, is usually all he is going to carry away from his reading.

As a media writer, the most widely used device for getting ideas in shape is to buttonhole some unsuspecting victim, the kind of person who is apt to read later what you have written.

A good way of using someone else for focus and perspective is to put such a person right into our piece of writing. You present your facts and ideas as seen in an observer with a detached point of view. Whenever you are writing about a group or an organisation, for instance, the natural thing to do is to focus on a typical member of the group. This sounds simple, but there is a pit fall in it. Going by the dictates of new elements, it will be hard to look away from the eye catching, outstanding focus on the typical member. This principle also applies when you write about events.

Proper focusing becomes difficult when you have neither a group of people nor a series of events, but there is always a way out. Even if your material looks at first like a shapeless mass of totally different items, there must be one point at which they will converge all together in one piece of writing. The trouble is that this common denominator is usually so simple and obvious that it is practically invisible.

4.0 CONCLUSION

No writer writes for himself. He puts pen on paper to share meaning with someone else so we write for people to read. To be successful of it, the writer must develop an ear for writing. This means knowing how to identify a good write up and how to package one for your readers. An ear for writing entails honing your writing skills until it flows in your veins.

5.0 SUMMARY

To develop an ear for writing, certain things must be in place and certain things must be done. They include how to apply your writing to people's mind by knowing what they know and what they don't know. How you can trivialize your writing no matter how technical the subject is and how to focus and organize data.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Certain variables determine how we write. List and discuss some of them.
- ii. Explain the concept 'Ear for Writing'.
- iii. List and discuss the importance of being trivial.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Flesch, R. (1992). *The Art of Readable Writing*. New York: Collier Books.

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UNIT 3 INFORMATION SOURCES

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Primary Information Source
 - 3.2 Secondary Information Source
 - 3.3 Database
 - 3.4 Sources and Strategies
 - 3.5 Classification of Media Contents
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The value of any article/essay depends on the quality of the material going into it. A computer term –GIGO, standing for garbage in, garbage out – expresses this idea vividly with reliable facts behind it, a good article or essay can be written. Media writers and journalist have the duty to inform the public. Sometimes, before they can carry out this function, they have to be informed themselves. Before writing a story, you need to determine the purpose of your work and analyze your audience as we stated earlier on.

Information for media writing can be obtained through various sources. Strong writing is based on information gathered through objective observation and research.

Media writer writes what they observe. But rarely is the information they use limited to first hand observations. Writers ask other people what they have seen and heard. They chart with participants in news events to learn their thoughts and feelings and to gain new information from a different perspective. They check records and documents to glean background information and to verify the assertion of participants and observers.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to identify:

- Primary Sources
 - Secondary Sources
 - World Wide Web
 - On-line services
 - Browsers
- } Database

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Primary Information Source

A primary source of information is a source from which information on data are obtained first hand for your particular need. Primary source data may be obtained through personal interviews and observation as well as through experimentation. An example of primary source is an eye witness account given by someone who experienced the event first hand. One problem with many primary sources is the accuracy of the information you receive. You carry out a survey to be aware of what the people know and what they don't know; to identify the medium that they are exposed to; to determine their literacy level and also to determine public opinion through VOX pop on a controversial topics or project or issue. You can generate primary data through telephone and physical interviews. In doing this, you have to identify yourself and your organisation and must be armed with a list of questions and a preliminary knowledge of the subject matter. There must be some criteria for selecting those to seek information from. It might be that they are participants, eye witnesses, experts, etc. Furthermore, you can generate primary information through observations.

The power of observation is a must have for all intending and perspective media writers. It enables you to see what the crowd is not seeing and hear what they are not hearing which leads to successful scooping.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

List and discuss the various materials of primary sources.

3.2 Secondary Information Source

Most secondary information sources are usually documents or other materials that contains information gathered by someone else. This

information is usually published or printed. Secondary information sources include Indexes, Almanacs, Yearbooks, Periodicals, etc.

Indexes include a list of the titles of articles appearing in a variety of publications.

Almanacs and Yearbooks: these sources contain concise information on important events that occurred during a given period. It also includes important dates and places and persons.

Periodicals that are of general interest to media writers include national and international newspapers and textbooks.

A word of caution about secondary data is that you should always check the date of publication and the source. You don't want to use outdated information and you want it to be from a credible, reputable and unbiased source. Remember that just because information appears in print does not necessarily make it true. Use the following checklist to help you determine the reliability of a secondary source of information.

- Does the source provide current information on the topic?
- Is the source reliable?
- Is the author an authority on the subject?
- Does the author identify his or her opinions?

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss the dangers inherent in Secondary Sources.

3.3 Database

Technology has opened a whole new world of electronic resources to help the media writer. There are a lot of facilities that individuals can access from their offices or homes through the internet. The internet is the fastest growing electronic source of information. Literally, people from all over the world and in all professions including government and educational institutions can exchange and retrieve information through the internet. Internet tools that can be used to print information include the World Wide Web, on-line services and browser.

The World Wide Web (WWW) is a segment of the internet that contains electronic documents. Information on the web is in the form of web pages that contain text graphics etc.

On-line services are self contained free based service that provides extensive resources to their members. Typical resources are e-mail, on-line news and so on.

A browser also known as a search engine allows you to quickly access specific information on the internet about a subject of interest to you. You can exert general subject searches using browsers such as data banks work by searching for key words in the computer's memory. For instance, a writer planning a series about how university lifestyles have led to great stress for students might submit the word "university students lifestyle", "University students stress" and perhaps "University students mental health" to the computer. The computer would then search its data base words for articles with those words in title.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

List and discuss the components of the data base information source

3.4 Sources and Strategies

Before you start phoning people and asking questions, talk to colleagues who know something about the individuals or the subject you are writing about. If you do your initial research where you work, you will get some leads to sources. Even when the major source for a story is published research, it is essential to talk to the people involved. There may have been new developments. And no matter how thorough your spadework, there is never time to read everything. Talking to experts can be a way of getting further clarification, verification and the information you missed.

Different kinds of stories call for different kind of sources. The important thing to remember is that it is rarely advisable to interview only one person for a story. Every individual has a personal point of view, experiences and prejudices. You must talk to people who have differing perspectives and prejudices.

There are some points to note about fact-finding. Take careful notes to be sure the information you recorded is accurate. Spell back names of people and places. Repeat figures and say them aloud to be sure of what the source said.

Be sure to keep the information sources straight. Some writers organize their sources by subject or expertise while some writers record just the names and numbers of someone. Use your indexes of someone to record home, telephone number. A natural question

for the beginning media writer building a list of sources is who I should interview. Newson (1988:80). For many articles you will be able to find a government agency or non-profit organisation that deals with the subject. Most interviewers take a tape recorder to be sure they get the information correctly and capture the facts first hand. You need to be taking notes just as if the machine were not there. When interviewing people for a story, you should ask appropriate question.

The best way to retain sources is to be direct and honest with them. This applies to all information sources. Quote someone accurately and you will earn their trust. If you make a mistake apologize. Always thank sources for their help, and be considerate of their time. Organize your questions so you don't have to call back (but it is better to call back than make a mistake).

Don't be in too big a hurry. You may have to listen to more than you called for, but listening show you care about the source as a person not just as a handy resource. However, sometimes you pick up ideas from than you wouldn't have gotten otherwise, or you get some additional insight. Be on the watch out for non verbal feedback from the interviewee to know how to arrange your questions. You are not under obligation to show our source your write up before publication, but you are obligated to be certain that what you write is accurate, balance and fair.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

List some of the strategies for handling information sources.

3.5 Classification of Media Contents

The mass media are institutions that disseminate information. For them to be generally acceptable, they must have something for everyone at the same time. This means that the media content should be generic in nature and at the same time specific. It is a kind of bin that welcomes all kinds of content. The media content however, is orderly arranged and presented to attract sustain and maintain patronage from the public.

The practice of content classification is a strategy by media people to encourage readability and save readers time. Even if a man has all the time in the world, there is no way he can read all the contents of a particular edition up to the publishers address. Classification or categorization is therefore important to offer direction to the readers

who are usually time constrained. Below, are the sub-divisions into which editors and media producers group the stories to its reading:

- **Politics:** This sub-desk has become one of the most vibrant desks in newspaper today. Man, according to political philosophers, is a political animal. For survival sake therefore, man shows concern about the power play of who emerges ruler or leader and how he emerges and rules. These issues plus the division of amenities has made the political page a must read.
- **Economy:** the strength of the economy determines the velocity and power of a country. The economic desk has become so important in modern newspaper industry that some newspapers and magazines have designated their content solely for business. The economic desk deals with issues like income, shares and stock exchange operations, investment, productivity, consumption, e.t.c. For reliable information about economic issues, the writer should consult the departments of Economics in universities, Federal Ministry of Economic Planning, Government agencies and non-governmental organizations and, other economic experts or reliable information's.
- **The Presidency:** The presidency desk, specifically handles formation concerning the executive arm of government at the federal level. The president is the head of the executive arm of government and all issues concerning the executive arms of government involves the presidency. It handles issues like inter-governmental relationships and other issues the president may deem fit to add to his portfolio. For a reliable information on this, the writer can consult the permanent secretary, senior directors and political top notchers.
- **Parliament:** The parliament has a responsibility in any country to make laws. Depending on the type of government in operation in a country, the parliament could be made up of one chamber or two chambers. That is, the Senate and the House of representatives. For reliable information on the parliament, the reporter or writer should visit the National Assembly Complex, have a chat with principal officers, interview notable political scientists and lawyers, and also consult documents like the constitution and other national assembly obligations.

- **Judiciary:** The judiciary desk handles information about the judiciary. It is in this desk that you have information about court pronouncements and other judicial matters. For reliable information, the writer should consult authorities in Law, visit court sessions, and also chat with parties involved in litigation.
- **Sports:** This sub-desk has become one of the most popular and most important in newspaper publishing. A lot of newspapers today concentrate only on sports and they are breaking-even. In a recent survey conducted in Benin, shows that about 90% of newspaper readers visit the sports pages. The sports pages have become a kind of meal ticket or life line for most newspapers. For a reliable information, a writer should consult sportsmen and women, former sports persons, sporting officials and bodies like FIFA, CAF, NFA e.t.c. A writer can also visit Ministries of sports across the country.
- **Crime:** The crime desk has become one of the busiest desks in most media organizations. This is so because the level of crime in the society is increasing everyday. Readers therefore visit this page to keep abreast of criminal activities and how they can avoid being victims. The crime page contains information about security and insecurity, armed robbery and other economic crimes. For reliable information, a reporter can consult or interview law enforcement operatives like the police or S.S.S. He can also visit police cells or prisons and chat with experts in criminology and psychology.
- **Education:** Education is one of the cardinal functions of the mass media. The educational material handled in the sub-desk can be formal or informal. Formal materials are those that try to imitate classroom conditions, while those for informal are just meant for general knowledge and enlightenment. The education desk contains information about educational institutions in the country from primary to universities. The desk deals with issues like breakthroughs in science and technologies, educational policies, e.t.c. Reliable information can be gathered from the following authorities:

Ministries of Education, National Universities Commission, Boards of Education, e.t.c.

The following broad strategies can be used for gathering information:

- **Interviewing:** This is a question and answer section between a reporter and a news source? It can be formal or informal. Formal when it is booked in advance and informal when it is impromptu. Whatever forms the task of the writer is to draw out news worthy information from the interviewee.
- **News Conference:** This is another strategy for gathering information. Here, the media organizations are invited and addressed by a news source. It also offers the source an opportunity to field questions from the reporters and issue them press releases.
- **Beat Reporting:** The beat is the place of assignment of a reporter. It is usually a news area that the reporter must comb to gather information. Beat reporting can be good through proper management and creation of beat relations.
- **Observation:** Observation is one of the strategies media writers use to source information. It is the art and science of paying attention to details to ensure that nothing is taken for granted and nothing escapes our watchful eye. An observant person will always hear information, see information and, feel information. It also means seeing what others are not seeing and hear what others are not hearing and being able to use previous events to interpret and predict future actions.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Identify four media contents and discuss four possible sources of it.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The mass media provides information to the reading public. The information the media provide are not manufactured by them. They are most times informed so that they can inform the public. The quality of any media write up is a function of the quality of information that went into its writing. And this in turn determines the level and quality of public opinion.

5.0 SUMMARY

Quality source provides quality information. Source and quality information sources determine the quality of media write up. Some are of various types viz – Primary, Secondary, On-line, etc. And each has its strategic application technique.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Discuss the importance of Database in modern media writing.
- ii. Compare and contrast primary and secondary sources of information.
- iii. Discuss the various strategies used for various sources.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Newson, D.; *et al* (1988). *Media Writing; Preparing Information for the Mass Media*. California: Wadsworth Pub. Co.

Camp, S.C. (1998). *College Communication*. New York: Glencoe McGraw-Hill.

UNIT 4 REVISING, EDITING AND PROOF-READING

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Revising
 - 3.2 Editing
 - 3.3 Proof-Reading
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Journalism is one profession that is always in a hurry. This state is partly a function of the highly perishable nature of journalistic data and also due to the cut throat competition in the industry. It is therefore pertinent that revising, editing and proofreading should be part and parcel of packaging information for the mass media. After writing the initial draft of your work, it is important you go through these three steps – revising, editing and proofreading. Some writers do all three tasks simultaneously, and some writers focus on one step at a time. Revising improves the content and organisation of writing, editing refines the revised draft and adds polish, proofreading spots typographical and grammatical errors. As you learn to revise, edit and proofread, you will be more effective as a mass media writer.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- explain revising, editing and proofreading
- explain the importance of revising your written communication
- use a revision checklist to improve the organisation, wording and tone of your written communication
- apply the six Cs of editing to your written communication
- explain why proofreading written work is essential
- discuss the five steps in proof-reading
- apply proofreading marks and technology when revising, editing and proof-reading.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Revising

Revising is the process of “seeing again” Camp (1998:140). In other words, when you revise, you have to stand back from your work and read it with fresh eyes in order to improve the writing. To do that, you need to allow some time to put your writing aside for a few hours or even for a day depending. Then you should be able to read what you have written more objectively putting yourself in the shoes of your readers.

Revising is not a hit-or-miss procedure you need to ask yourself specific questions when revising any piece of writing. You should always ask question about the purpose audience and tone of your message.

- Is the purpose of the article/essay clear?

If your purpose is to persuade or inform your readers, have you included all pertinent information and appropriate wording to enable them understand and comprehend.

- Is the writing tailored to the audience?

To tailor the writing to the audience, consider your audience’s familiarity with the subject.

- Is the tone appropriate for the readers?

Tone usually refers to the general effect a piece of writing creates. For instance, the tone of your work could be formal or informal, serious or humorous, positive or negative etc. It comes through the choice of words and other element of style.

After answering the basic questions about purpose, audience and tone, you should examine the organisation of your write up.

- Is the organisation logical?

Begin the write up with a strong opening paragraph or introduction that states the main ideas of the write up. The middle paragraphs should sufficiently support it and the co-ordination should do just that. One way to make sure that your writing has a logical organisation is to prepare an outline before you begin to write.

Then follow that outline carefully as you write.

- Do all sentences stick to the point?

As you review the organisation of your message, pay particular attention to any sentences that seem to stray from the main idea of each paragraph. Such sentences usually contain unnecessary details because they detract from the message and create confusion.

- Are transitional words used to connect ideas?

If your paragraphs are complete and if you have presented them in a clear, logical order, you should then make sure that you have included effective bridges or transitions between ideas, sentences and paragraphs. Refer to the list of transitional words and phrases on the previous units. Once you are confident that you have included all the necessary information, take a close look at the words that comprise the sentences and paragraphs.

- Are words used correctly?

First make sure that you have used each word correctly. If you are unsure of the meaning of a word, either look it up in a dictionary or find an alternative word.

- Are the words vivid and specific?

Now determine whether the words you have chosen will have the effect you intend. The purpose of all writing is to transfer your thoughts and ideas as completely and as forcefully as possible to someone else. Colourful vivid and specific words accomplish that purpose more easily than others in media writing.

- Are any word overused or unnecessary?

Check to see whether you have used the same words or expressions over and over. Such practice irate readers. For example instead of overworking “told” for instance, you can use word like related, announced, declared, asserted, directed, etc.

- Is the sentence structure varied?

Most people write exactly as they speak, and most people begin sentences with the subject. This creates monotony of sentence structure. You can reduce reader boredom by adding some variety.

- Is the message written in active voice?

Another important step is to see if verbs are in the active voice whenever possible.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain what you understand by Organisation and language revising.

3.2 Editing

Editing is the process of checking a revised draft to make sure it meets the criteria of the six Cs of media writing. That is you make sure the write up is clear, complete, concise, consistent, correct and courteous. Editing not only helps improve the quality of your write up but also helps improve your skill as a writer.

Editing skill is important for anyone involved with media writing because of the sensitive nature of media presentations. The purpose of editing is to make the write up as effective as possible. You can improve a write up by using the questions posed in the following editing checklist.

- **Is it Clear:** Media writings are written to get action through information, entertainment, education, etc. Good mass media writers use simple words, proper English and make every effort to avoid sloppy writing.
- **Is it Complete:** In mass media writing, a complete story is one that answers the 5Ws and H. It is assumed that you have written a complete story when you provided information on what happened; Who were involved; When did it happen, Where did it happen; Why did it happen and How it happened. It does not matter which of the Ws comes first. It depends on the angle you want to approach the story.
- **Is it Concise?** Unnecessary words, phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs are a barrier to effective media writing. Needless repetition of words decreases the effectiveness of your write up because the reader must read a lot of words to get a little information. To make your writing concise, include only necessary words and avoid repeating the same words several times in a story.
- **Is it Consistent?** Mass media writing should be consistent in fact, treatment and sequence. A story is consistent in fact if it does not contradict itself. It is the quest for consistency that made various media organizations to have their own style book. And experience has shown that consistency helps in page planning and space badgering.

Follow these guidelines:

- When listing both men's and women's names, use courtesy titles for all or none of the names e.g. Mr. Bello, Mr. Osagie, Mr. Chukwu, Mr. Njoku, etc.
- Use a consistent style in writing numbers and amounts.
- Use a consistent sequence – alphabetical, chronological or numerical to improve the flow of a story.
- **Is it Correct?** Accuracy in content, typing and mechanism are the hallmarks of media writing. The multiplier effect of media presentations is so great that a little falsehood can destroy an organisation or nation. The importance of public opinion in modern governance cannot be over stressed. And the usefulness and quality of public opinion depends on the correctness of the information the public get from the mass media. Furthermore, with laws of libel and slander and other legal watchdogs, the mass media writer cannot afford to misinform his readers.
- **Is it Courteous?** Courtesy here means that the story is balanced, reader-centered and positive. Most of the issues written about in the media usually involve more than one party. Courtesy therefore demands that the parties involved should be given equal opportunity and play in the write up.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

List and explain the 6Cs of Editing.

3.3 Proof-Reading

Proofreading is the process of examining a story to find errors that should be corrected. Sometimes, proofreading is a verification process, such as checking a letter typed from a handwritten rough draft. There may be no document for comparison, however, when you are proofreading your own work. In either case, you should look carefully for errors in capitalization content, format, grammar, word-usage, number usage, punctuation, spelling and typing. To be a good proofreader, you must be familiar with all of these types of errors. The proofreading process should begin in the early stages of story preparation and continue through each stage including the final copy. In media writing, the responsibility for quality rests more on the writer although proofreading is a team effort of all those involved with the processing and preparation of the story.

PROOFREADERS' MARK

S/N	MARK	FIND IN	DEMONSTRATION	RESULT
1.	=	Capitalize a letter or word	Edo and move	Edo and MOVE
2.	/	Lowercase a letter	This	this
3.	S	Transpositions	On may write	Write on May
4.	stet	Do not make the change	stet He went for it	He went for it.
5.	O	Spelt out	(2) Cars on the (RD)	Two cars on the Road.
6.	Ì	Delete a letter and close up	Mobøile	Mobile
7.	∩	Delete a word	Wrote two two cheques	Wrote two cheques
8.	∩ v	Close space	see ing	Seeing
9.	^	Insertions	In the office block ^	In the office block
10.	~	Print boldface	Topseed	Topseed
11.	-----	Remove boldface	Topseed	Topseed
12.	_	Underscore	<u>Title</u>	<u>Title</u>
13.	⊙	Remove underscore	<u>Title</u>	Title
14.	| _____	Begin a new paragraph	The show end/_however	The show end 'However'
15.	] [	Indentation	]In the beginning was[	In the beginning was
16.	ss[	Single Space	ss[xxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxx	xxxxxxx xxxxx xxxxxxxxx xxxxxxx
17.	ds[	Double Space	ds[xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxx	Xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxx xxxxx
18.	ts[	Triple space	ts[xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx	xxxxxxx xxxxxxx xxxxxxx xxxxxxx

Proofreading is an essential step in the writing process. As a student or as professional journalist, you must get into the proofreading habit. Occasionally, you might ask others to proofread your work. Proofreading your own writing is usually considered more difficult than proofreading the work of others for two reasons. First, you as the writer may tend to be overconfident, believing that you corrected all errors during writing. Second, you may be overly familiar with the write up, which may cause you to ‘read’ what you intended to write instead of reading what you actually wrote. That is why it is important that all media outputs enjoy the benefits of a fresh set of eyes before publication.

Uncorrected errors create a bad impression; they also can cost you and your organisation money in form of litigation. It is not always palatable to retract or correct published information in the media because the public will not believe that the retraction was genuine but rather they will think the media organisations have been settled.

When revising, editing and proofreading your work, use proofreaders’ mark as a quick simple way, to indicate changes or corrections in handwritten or typed copy. Once you have marked changes and corrections on the handwritten copy, it is easy to mark the typed copy.

Below are some standard marks used in media writing to indicate corrections in handwritten or typed copy? Study the marks and become familiar with their use.

PROOFREADERS’ MARK

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Write YES if the items are the same in both columns and NO if they are different.

1.	Mario Albierto Iglesia	Mario Albierto Ogbesia
2.	Anthony John, PhD	Anthony John, PhD
3.	Mr. and Mrs. Mark Rice	Mr. & Mrs. Mark Rice
4.	₦3786.45	37866.45
5.	July 21, 1997	July 12, 1997
6.	9833V39	9833V39

4.0 CONCLUSION

Editing, revising and proofreading are very important for all write ups. But their importance appears to double when it is media writing. The mass media can be everywhere at the same time. They therefore have power to influence the public. Without adequate revision, any incorrect information from the media can cause war among individuals and nations.

5.0 SUMMARY

Mass media writings are meant for public consumption. It is therefore important there should be proper editing and proofreading of the copies before public to avoid communication break do as through misinformation.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. List and explain (10) ten proofreading methods you know.
- ii. Explain how we can avoid misinformation through editing.
- iii. Identify and explain the steps to revision.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Camp, S.C. (1998). *College Communication*. New York: Glencoe McGraw-Hill.

Okoro, N.; *et al* (2003). *Writing for the Media Society*. Nsukka: Prize Publishers.

UNIT 5 ORGANISING THE FACTS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Traditional Method
 - 3.2 Introduction
 - 3.3 The Body
 - 3.4 Variation
 - 3.5 The Reportorial Notes
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Even before the task of gathering the facts concerning a particular write up has been completed, a media writer starts thinking of how to organize them into a comprehensive readable write up. The more experienced you are as a media writer, the more automatic or unconscious the habit becomes. There is no hard and fast rule to organizing a material for media publication. It is equally important to note that expert organizers of materials for media publication are not born but made. The task of putting pen on paper to express an idea in such a way to make meaning to the reader may not be as easy as lay man think it is. It is one of the most dynamic exercises one can engage on. As new information is obtained, earlier ideas regarding the theme or central idea or peg coming out of the assignment may be modified. This is done under the pressure and tyranny of deadline – official time limit expected of a writer to submit his write up.

Professional journalistic organizations have devoted considerable attention to ways of making media presentation more readable. In part, they were motivated by the success of magazines' brighter and livelier fashion of organizing the facts. Also, and perhaps more important, radio and television writers have demonstrated now the gist of a story can be presented in fewer words than in print.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to discuss the following concepts:

- traditional methods of organisation
- introduction
- the Body
- variations
- the Reportorial Notes.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Traditional Method

Since World War II there have been numerous studies of the traditional method of organizing a write up for media presentation. Some journalism scholars enthusiastic over some readability formulas have blamed widespread reader ignorance and indifference upon the traditional style of journalistic composition. Some others believe that the traditional method should be modified to enable media writer's greater understanding of the philosophical and statistical aspects of the communication process. Recently proponents of liberation and developmental journalism are insisting that the media must assume greater leadership in investigating and crusading in the public interest which are taboos to the traditional method.

The traditional method of packaging information for the mass media emphasizes the most important fact or climax of the write up at the very beginning of the write up. This method is contrary to other methods of packaging things like essay, poetry, novel and short story where others usually begins with minor or incidental details and work to a climax near or at the end of their compositions. According to MacDougall (1982:98) by far most of the stories in print everyday are written in accordance with the traditional style. It is advisable to master the method first in order to break it intelligently later. These traditional styles with its glorification of the 5Ws have been taught to journalists for several generations, they often seem to be trite and academic. Nevertheless, no matter what writing or speaking style is used, and regardless of whether the contents are objectively descriptive or subjectively analytical, the reader or listener's curiosity has to be satisfied as regards the who, what, when, where and why as well as the how of a story. This traditional method is noted to facilitate reading, satisfy curiosity, facilitate make-up and headline writing.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Identify and explain the rudiments of the traditional method.

3.2 Introduction

In packaging information for the mass media, there is need for introduction. This introductory part contains the gist or skeleton or peg of the entire story in minimum words. Subsequent paragraphs elaborated upon various aspects of the introduction, that is popularly called lead in journalism parlance; making them more definite; as they supplied additional details in the order of their importance as the writer judged them. Any media writing for either print or broadcast that does not have an appropriate lead is judged to be unprofessionally packaged. In the effort to avoid cumbersome lead paragraphs, and to increase readability, some media organizations have gone to the opposite extreme of invoking the “one fact sentence” rule which would lead to better less cluttered and readable intros. As we said somewhere else in this course, the lead or introduction is the window and the door that showcases and leads to the “bread and butters” contained in the write up. It has the capability of attracting or repelling the media consumer. The introduction like the head of a human body must be functioning properly if the entire body is to be appreciated. Always pay special attention to your introduction because they will determine whether or not your write up will be read or not and to what extent it will be comprehended or understood.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

How can introduction be made readable and more attractive?

3.3 The Body

In view of the tendency to reduce the first sentence of a write up to the fewest possible words, the body of the entire work will have a lot of work to do so as to make the story flow more definitely. It is difficult or impossible to chart stories so that Units do not overlap. However, the body is arranged in such a way that it is possible to achieve the following:

- **Unity:** A method of obtaining rhetorical unity as one short paragraph follows another is by use of linkage words. A skillful use of these words creates a flow and, at the same time, enables you to introduce new facts. Some of these linkage words are discussed in the proceeding modules.

- **Block Paragraphing:** In longer stories regardless of whether the lead was one or several paragraphs long, paragraphs are so written as to include a single subtopic each. This type of paragraphing differs from the type that English composition teaches, media writers are encouraged to write to ensure paragraphing the idea-unit is broken up into subtopics. In other words, media writers paragraph their paragraphs. This type of block paragraphs is distinctly advantageous for news writing and other media writings. It permits the insertion or deletion of paragraphs without disarranging a story. Frequently it is necessary, in the light of new information to recast certain paragraphs, to add additional paragraphs and to remove others.
- **Chronological:** A widely used method of organizing the material after the lead is chronological, at least for a number of paragraphs, after which new facts can be added in block paragraph style. This type of organisation is effective in stories in which action is described in detail.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

What are the merits of block paragraphing?

3.4 Variations

In stories in which the human interest is paramount, the rule that it should be possible to cut final paragraphs without ruining the news interest is not possible. There are some stories that must be read in their entirety. The following are some examples of such stories.

- **Sequence:** In a story written in sequence style all facts are arranged in strictly chronological order. The climax or satisfaction of the reader's curiosity is postponed until the end. Thus a sequence story cannot be edited from the bottom up as could the chronological story which has a news lead.
- **Cumulative Interest:** The lead of this type of story contains some sort of news peg. In addition to emphasizing the tone or situation of the story, as it progresses his kind of story incites the reader interest, which cumulates as each succeeding sequence and paragraph makes for greater definiteness.

- **Suspended Interest:** A suspended interest story is one in which the writer “strings along” the reader to the very end before giving him the news peg or gist on which the item is based. Such stories resemble magazine short stories in that they must be read in their entirety. Frequently, the climax may be a surprise in any case; it satisfies the reader’s interest which has been suspended because of the indefiniteness of early details.
- **Delayed News Peg:** Since most readers of sports related write ups are fans who directly know how their favourite team or players faired, sports’ writing has undergone a great change. Today the fan who didn’t attend the game or watch it on television has to hunt for the score in the fourth or fifth paragraph. Then he may or may not return to read the description or evaluative or philosophical earlier paragraphs. Sports writing or sports journalism is one of the most lucrative writing units in the journalism fraternity. As a beginning media writer, you are admonished to keep out of your own stories only an occasional reference to the fact that a writer or reporter asked a certain question or made an unsuccessful effort to obtain an important clarification is permitted. The use of either the first or second person is discouraged. Columnists, special writers and others in that class of media writing who sign their write ups are exempted from this rule when effectiveness cannot be obtained otherwise.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

List and discuss the organizing styles that violate editing a story from bottom.

3.5 The Reporter’s Notes

Prerequisite to a well organized story is careful rearrangement of the writer’s notes. For the experienced reporter, the task of dictating a story over the telephone to a rewrite person from a handful of notes scribbled on copy paper while sitting in a stuffy booth is an everyday matter. It is in the writer’s interest to make as few false starts as possible, thus avoiding the push buttoning involved in making corrections. While learning to write, you profit by an outline of the facts you have gathered. You have to first of all, pick the feature to go into the lead, next, to be certain essential questions are answered and there is sufficient identification and authority; then to decide which phrases of the lead need

amplification in the first part of the body of the story and how it is to be provided and finally, to arrange the other facts which should be included. Seldom, if ever, does the writer jot down facts in the order in which they should be used. As you learn more and more about the incident one or more lead possibilities are seen. There are few if any writer, regardless of experience, who fail to profit by a study of all notes taken and an outlining of them. A young writer frequently finds it profitable to number the facts included in his notes in the order of importance. To summarize, the first step in good media writing is good reporting. No story writes itself. The factual materials must be gathered first. The person who does not know how to observe and gather facts never will be able to write a good account.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

What are benefits of a writer note taking?

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have tried to assert in this Unit that it is one thing to have information about what you want to write and it is another to organize those information in such a way that will produce comprehensive and readable write up. Organizing your facts is a form of mental exercise that you must work on as you gather the information physically. Without proper organisation, a collection of facts will remain just that. It is only proper organizing that will produce a good write up. For various reasons, media writings are organized in various forms and ways depending on the background of the writer and the particular medium he is writing for. Organisation is important in media writing to ensure the unity of purpose of all the component parts of the entire write up. A story that contain facts but it is not flowing is hardly read to the end. The media are principally known to offer information and enlightenment. Any improper organisation might lead to misinformation which is not in the public interest or professional interest of the journalist.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this Unit we have dealt with the various methods of organisation right from the traditional method to introduction, to the body of the write up down to journalistic jottings of the writer.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. What are the merits and demerits of the traditional method of organisation?
- ii. List and discuss the components of variation.
- iii. Write an explanatory note on the Body of a write up.

7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READING

MacDougall, D. Curtis (1982). *Interpretative Reporting*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.

Okoro N.; *et al* (2003). *Writing for the Media Society*. Nsukka: Prize Publishers.

Newson; D. *et al* (1988). *Media Writing: Preparing Information for the Mass Media*. California: Wadsworth Pub. Co.

MODULE 3

Unit 1	Conciseness
Unit 2	Avoiding Banality
Unit 3	Readability Formulas
Unit 4	Semantics
Unit 5	Correct Usage

UNIT 1 CONCISENESS**CONTENTS**

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Superfluous Details
3.2	Superfluous Words
3.3	Superfluous Phrases
3.4	Superfluous Clauses
3.5	Redundancies
3.6	Simplicity
3.7	Proper Emphasis
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The objective of effective journalistic writing should be to avoid cumbersomeness without becoming choppy or repetitious through excessive use of referents. Words according to Francis Bacon are like leaves. When they are too much on a tree, you can hardly see the fruits and when they are inadequate, the life of the tree is endangered.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- identify superfluous details
- identify superfluous words, phrases and clauses
- identify redundancies
- write with simplicity
- apply the proper emphasis.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Superfluous Details

Relaxing of the rule that all of the five W's and H must be included in the first paragraph of a news story generally achieves the objective of uncluttering the lead or the first paragraph of your write-up. Generally wordiness is a famous barrier to effective media writing. The lead is like the window to what you have written. When it is well written, it will attract a lot of window shoppers for your piece. And remember that journalism according to Prof. Arnold is "Literature in a hurry" and so too much details right from the lead down to the end may discourage readability and of course these may be time to such correct details.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

What is a superfluous detail?

3.2 Superfluous Words

It gives you a sense of satisfaction that something has been done as an accomplished journalist in producing a piece in which every word fits into place and helps to bring out the points. Avoiding too many words therefore increases your reader's power of understanding; you have not only to come to grips with your write-up, but also come to prove to others that you have grasped it.

Words are the elements you use as a media writer to communicate messages in writing when you write, you create pictures with words – just as artists create pictures with points. To be effective in journalism, you must learn to use words effectively.

A media writer has to produce a simplified version of a technical or account scientific and other stories. Specifically the articles the and an often can be eliminated in media writing e.g. Weak: It is for the men who make good. Better: It is for men who make good.

Sentences may be shortened and made more forceful by making verbs more direct as:

Weak: The Committee arrived at a conclusion.

Better: The Committee concluded.

In art of editing (Macmillan 1972), Baskette and Sissors listed some circumlocutions that can be reduced to save time and money.

Below are some examples.

- A good part of (much)
- As a general rule (usually)
- Bouquet of flowers (bouquet)
- Concentrated his efforts on (concentrated on)
- Drew to a close (ended)
- Due to the fact that (because)
- Entered a bid of (bid)
- Filled to capacity (filled)
- Gave its approval (approved)
- In the immediate vicinity (near)
- Kept under surveillance (watched)
- Tendered his resignation (resigned) etc.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Why are words important in media writing?

3.3 Superfluous Phrases

A combination of words that properly belong together is called a thought Unit. When the words of a thought Unit are placed correctly, the reader can understand the meaning quickly and easily. When the writer incorrectly places the words of a thought unit, however, the reader may get a mistaken idea of the writer's meaning. In journalism, such mistakes are more likely to cause problem or confusion or mayhem.

In correctly placed phrases, can completely change the meaning of a message. It is important you edit your work meticulously to see that you have placed phrases correctly, example. Weak: "This hard drive can be installed by any one who has studies the computer manual in ten minutes". No computer manual could be studied in ten minutes, but any one who had studied the computer manual for a reasonable length of time could probably install a hard drive in ten minuets. Often a strong verb, adjective, adverb or possessive form can be substituted for a phrase. Examples

Weak:	A baby with brown eye
Better:	A brown-eyed baby
Weak:	They assembled with little commotion
Better:	They assembled quietly.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

What is a phrase?

3.4 Superfluous Clauses

The misplacement of clause in your write up can have even more devastating consequences than a misplaced phrase. Examples.

Weak: “Our goal in marketing is to encourage the public to try our products until our health foods become better known”.

The sentence sounds as if once the products are better known; no one will want to buy them. Moving the conjunction “Until” clears the ambiguity.

Better: Until our health foods become better known, our goal in marketing is to encourage the public to try our products.

Because clauses pose a special hazard since they often are used to explain people’s motive. Consider the following statements.

Weak: The clerk hardly listened to the customer’s complaint because she was concentrating so intensely on completing the form.

From the above, one wonders whether it was the clerk or the customer completing the form. While the original sentence is not wrong, the following sentence is better.

Better: Because she was concentrating so intensely on completing the form, the clerk hardly listened to the customer’s complaint.

Weak: All students who are interested should come.

Better: All interested students should come.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

What are the functions of a clause?

3.5 Redundancies

Careless repetition of words shows a lack of imagination on the part of the writer. An aspect of media writing that welcomes redundancies is advertisement writing where the major goal is to make readers remember the name and purpose of the product. However, when redundancies are not cleverly used, it can lead to

monotony. Excessive repetition of certain vowel or consonant sound can create tongue twisters that detract from the message no matter how slow you read. Below are some of the redundancies to avoid in media writing.

- Assemble together; kills insects dead; cancelled out; close proximity; co-operate together, exactly identical; fall down; other alternative; necessary requirement; etc.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

When do we allow redundancy in media writing?

3.6 Simplicity

The purpose of media writing is to communicate information to the reader, not to confound and confuse him; to make explicit and clear rather than enigmatic and complex. It is at the backdrop that the average media readers do not have all the time in the world. An impressive media writer is one who writes plainly and simply even though the situation may call for long technical words. The simple style is beautiful to read and easy to understand.

Simplicity is obtained in large part by avoiding elegant words when simple ones would do better. Usually:

- *Although* is better than despite the fact that
- *Before* is better than prior to
- *Body* is better than remains
- *Clear* is better than obvious
- *Danger* is better than preconsciousness
- *Fear* is better than apprehension
- *Fire* is better than conflagration
- *Funeral* is better than obsequies
- *If* is better than in the event of
- *Marriage* is better than nuptials
- *Meeting* is better than rendezvous
- *Since* is better than inasmuch as
- *Theft* is better than larceny
- *Understand* is better than comprehend
- *Well-paying* is better than lucrative

When two words are synonyms, simplicity can be obtained by using the shorter, as buy for purchase, car for automobile, try for attempt, use for utilize, etc.

Note that we are not saying that the other words are wrong but if your mission is to achieve simplicity in your write-up, it is better to follow the recommended ones.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 6

Why is it important to use simpler synonyms?

3.7 Proper Emphasis

Proper emphasis in media writing ensures that vagueness and indefiniteness are avoided and clarity is obtained by placing important ideas at the beginning of sentences. Also, by playing up the action, significance, result or feature of the paragraph or story, or by avoiding vogue and indefinite words and by eliminating superfluous details, words, phrases and clauses. Sometimes the active voice usually is more emphatic than the passive. Examples.

Vogue:	Some 100 persons were present
Better:	About 100 were present
Wordy:	People of Benin will be asked to contribute ₦ 400, 000 to the National Aids Campaign to relieve suffering and stop HIV, according to announcements made yesterday by Prof. Daramola NACA Chairman.
Concise:	Benin's quota in the National Aids Campaign relief is ₦ 400, 000, Prof. Daramola, NACA chairman said yesterday.
Weak:	When asked what he thought of the compromise plan of unemployment relief, Senator Ogbemor today said that ...
Definite:	Senator Ogbemor today condemned the compromise plan of unemployment relief as demagogic, unconstitutional and inadequate etc.

Newspaper style books and journalism texts generally admonished media writers never to begin a story with an article or indefinite pronoun. Like every other rule, this one could and should be broken on occasions.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 7

How do you achieve proper emphasis in writing for the mass media?

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have tried in this unit to explain the importance of conciseness in media writing. Conciseness has been tested to enhance comprehension and understanding of media write-up and others. This concept of conciseness is emphasized on the heel of global information explosion where the media public appears to be suffering from information overload.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have been able to show that you can play up action, significance or feature of a story by avoiding vagueness, wordiness and indefinite words and by eliminating superfluous details, words, phrases and clauses.

6.0 TUTOR-MAKRED ASSIGNMENT

- i. What is information overload and how is conciseness a solution to it.
- ii. With your own example, explain superfluous words, phrases and clauses.
- iii. What are redundancies? When is it allowed in media writing?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Camp and Salter, White (1998). *College Communication*. New York: Glenwe McGraw-Hill.

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UNIT 2 AVOIDING BANALITY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Idiomatic Expressions in Media Writing
 - 3.2 Bromides, Clichés, Platitudes
 - 3.3 Journalese
 - 3.4 Gobbledygook
 - 3.5 Academic Obscurity
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In journalism schools around the world, the day of the grammatical purist is gradually going, if not gone. Contemporary authorities recognize that language makes dictionaries and not vice versa. Many words in common use today were once frowned upon as slang. Every year, prominent writers coin new words that meet with popular acceptance. As a prospective young media writer, your word choice is not so much of a problem but tactless use of bromides, platitudes and clichés. What constitutes tactfulness in using slang, trite and hackneyed expressions is for the English department, not the school of journalism, to teach.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- effectively package messages for the media by avoiding banality
- define the following concepts in relation to writing for the mass media
 - Figures of Speech
 - Bromides, clichés, platitudes
 - Journalese
 - Academic obscurity
 - Gobbledygook

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Idiomatic Expressions in Media Writing

They are means of expression in media writing. When used effectively, they can add colour, clarity and enhance comprehension. However, because of possible reader contempt towards them, media writers are advised to use them with caution. The following idiomatic expressions generally should be used with caution if not avoided because they are likely to be misused, overused and abused. Experienced media writer who understand the techniques of using by feel, use them with ease and achieve maximum effect.

<i>Acid test</i>	<i>Pillar of the family</i>
<i>Ax to grind</i>	<i>Rain cats and dogs</i>
<i>Blessing in disguise</i>	<i>Silver lining</i>
<i>Busy as a bee</i>	<i>Smell a rat</i>
<i>Dull as dishwater</i>	<i>To swing the pendulum</i>
<i>Eyes bigger than his stomach</i>	<i>Worked like Trojans</i>
<i>Hail of bullets</i>	<i>Flow like water</i>
<i>Hangs in the balance</i>	
<i>In the limelight</i>	
<i>Long hours of the night</i>	
<i>Met his Waterloo</i>	
<i>Nipped in the bud</i>	
<i>Old as Methuselah</i>	

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain the following idiomatic expressions:

- i. Met his water loo
- ii. Rain Cats and Dogs
- iii. Smell a Rat
- iv. Ax to grind

3.2 Bromides, Cliches, Platitudes

Replacing overused words with more exact and colourful terms can make your writing lively and interesting. A cliché is an overused expression or idea. Most popular clichés once were innovative and effective; they became clichés by being overused and, in most instances, misapplied by people who were no longer aware of their original meanings. Good media writing demands that we think before we use expressions. The use of clichés exposes a lack of

imagination. Clichés waste time, obscure ideas and bore readers and listeners. Your imagination is sure to provide better expression once you resolve to avoid clichés. Many who use the cliché – “Rich as Croesus” have no idea of who Croesus was or the degree of his wealth. Similarly, the expression “as slow as molasses” is used by many who have never seen or used molasses. A few commonly heard clichés are:

As sharp as the tack
 Dead and a door nail
 Bright as a button
 Sure as rain
 Quiet as a grave
 As common as dirt
 As cool as a cucumber
 As hungry as a bear
 As new as tomorrow.

The similes listed here and dozen more like them have simply worn out their effectiveness by endless repetition.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Write a replacement for the underlined words in each of the following phrases:

1. A dynamic presentation
2. A beautiful view
3. A good person
4. A good book
5. A good employee

3.3 Journalese

The mass media have not contributed so much as one might expect to the coinage of new words, but they have helped exhaust the effectiveness of a larger number through indiscriminate repetition.

Among these are the following:

Bolt from a clear sky
 Brutally murdered
 Crime wave
 Cynosure of all eyes
 Police drag nets
 Smoke filled room

Usual reliable sources
Whirlwind tour
Will be staged, etc.

The problem is that these words are meaningless but they are overused by the media. The mass media is a writing profession and all journalists are expected to write. Journalism is a profession that relies on word use to share meaning. Some times some Grammarians frown at the way journalists use English. It is important to state here that Grammarians teach English while Mass Communicators use English. Sometimes also the term *journalior* is used as a derogatory term of journalist lowing standard of English usage. Such contempt cannot be ruled out because of the level and volume of English usage.

At times there are words and expressions that are popular and that are used by many who don't fully understand their meaning. Among recent examples are *viable*, *bottom line*, *scam*, *rip-off*, *syndrome*, *do your thing*, *connection*, *get the show on the road*, and *get the act together*. Some of these fortunately are classifiable as slang fads and are not easily adequate for media copy. Columnists, editorial writers and feature writers, however, should be beware.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

What are complaints of journalese in media writing?

3.4 Gobbledygook

It is unjournalistic to engage in pretentious phrasing that is likely to scare the reader away from your write up. The danger with gobbledygook is the tendency to twist and mangle words that ends up confusing rather than informing or educating the public. As we said earlier on, modern man is living under information explosion. So many things are calling for his attention at the same time. So many problems and issues to attend to. Media writers will do the reading public real good by writing as clear as possible. It is not true that it is a mark of great media writing if readers consult a dictionary before reading through an article. Such a practice or notion is totally unacceptable in broadcasting because before the listener could go for the dictionary, the bulletin must have finished. The essence of good journalism remains good writing and reporting, which means having something to say – the content rather than the medium is the message. In a democracy widespread knowledge is essential. It is therefore a great disservice to humanity if the media muddles prose and arranges words in ways that

befuddle the brain and grate on the ear of the media public; our customers are likely to lose their appetite for what the media serve them. The popularity of fuzzy writing indicates the widespread existence of fuzzy thinking among media writers who, in their frustration, accept what they don't understand as probably profound and who then struggle to interpret it.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Explain the essence of good journalism

3.5 Academic Obscurity

It has been observed that there is growing evidence of the functional illiteracy of many university graduates in Nigeria. There is now an increasing demand for a return to the basics of the traditional 3rs – reading, 'riting and 'rittenetic in journalism. Mass communication according to the National Universities Commission's benchmark is a social or behavioural science. Among the behavioural sciences, there is a desire to emphasise in the training of students, the art of sensitivity, social responsibility, creativity and the like in our course content. As in other professions, there seem to be a huge gulf between what is happening in the classroom with what is happening in the newsroom. There is need for needs-based teaching. It is true that knowledge of a language is not the same thing as ability to use the language. The daily media writer may not have the amount of knowledge that those in the Ivory towers have but they have been able to horne their skills in word usage and the entire society including the Ivory tower relies on them. Efficient reading involves understanding how language operates in communication, and it is precisely this understanding students must strive to acquire in school. The professor's grammar, spelling and punctuation are usually passable but his prose is apt to be pretentious, unclear and chaotic. A lot of people believe that writing is not language but merely a way of recording language by means of visible marks. Many American journalism authorities contend that too much emphasis on grammar and spelling should not be pushed too far. The emphasis is on what makes sense to the public and what they understand.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

What are the dangers of obscure writing?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Banality has to do with commonness. Various authorities in journalism schools all over the world have now agreed that writing to achieve effective communication is better than writing a literal master piece that is not understood by the audience. Journalism on a dynamic practice relies much on language use. And language in turn relies on the media to publicize and extend its frontiers. This symbolic relationship has been in existence since the inception of journalism and must be sustained if journalism must continue to serve the society well.

5.0 SUMMARY

In order to achieve all these, a media writer must know how to use idiomatic expressions effectively and what consists of journalese and other academics obscurity that make writing difficult.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. List (10) ten idiomatic expressions and explain them.
- ii. What is the criticism against Journalese?
- iii. What is gobbledygook?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

- Akpan, Emmanuel (ed) (1990). *Communication Arts Principles, Application and Practice*. Uyo: Modern Business Press.
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UNIT 3 READABILITY FORMULAS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Readability Authorities
 - 3.2 Readable Writing Benefits
 - 3.3 Readability Engineering Strategies
 - 3.4 Paragraphing Guidelines for Readability
 - 3.5 Practical Tips
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Mathematical formulas exist for testing the readability of a piece of writing. The most commonly used formulas test passage for average sentence length. At first glance, it might seem absurd that a mathematical formula could be of any use in measuring the readability of a piece of writing. But if you think about the principles of good writing, the formulas make sense. If you hold each sentence to one's idea, your sentence will, on the average be shorter than they would be otherwise. Sentences in the active voice are generally shorter than sentences in the passive voice.

Readability tests are just mechanical tools, to help you gauge the possible comprehension level of you writing. You are trying to communicate ideas, and you can write within levels of comprehension and still not accomplish that. A good readability score does not guarantee good writing. But it can be a useful check to see if your writing has a chance of being understood by your audience.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify the benefits of readable writing
- discuss the methods of engineering readability or component
- discuss: paragraphing, guidelines, readability authorities and caution.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Readability Authorities

The readability formulas grew out of studies of several researchers, most important of who were Rudolf Flesch of New York University and Robert Gunning, Director of Readable News Reports of Columbus, Ohio.

Following Flesch's recommendation, the Associated Press reduced its average used sentence length from 27 to 23 words and its average word sentence length from 1.74 to 1.55 syllables.

Upon the advice of Gunning, the United Press simplified its writing style so as to be suitable for readers with 11.7 years of education whereas formerly it presumably was writing for those who had gone to school 16.7 years.

Flesch's formula allegedly estimated reading ease and "human interest". The former was measured by the average length of words and sentences – the shorter, the easier to read, 1.5 syllables and an average sentence length of 19 words being considered best for newspapers. Human interest was measured by the percentage of "personal words" and "personal sentences". Flesch contended that proper combination of the two variables made for good newspaper reading.

Gunning considered three factions viz:

- Sentence pattern, difficulty beginning when the average number of words per sentence exceeded twenty.
 - Fog Index, a measure of complex or abstract words.
 - Human interest – the frequent use of names of people, referents, to those names and other human interest words.
- MacDougall (1982:150-151)

The virtue of the Flesch's experiment is that it has made writers think more of their writing. However, critics of Flesch and Gunning like the Dale-Choll system contend that brevity does not necessarily equate with clarity. A short word can be as vague as a long one, and a short sentence can be as misleading as a book.

Proper names, other critics of these formulas have pointed out; do not necessarily lead to greater understanding unless the reader knows the persons mentioned and understand the reference to them. For instance "He was as mad as Amadi" is about as readable as you

can get, but if the reader never heard of Amadi, sits meaning is lost in him. It therefore means that readability is a relative term in media writing. There are other variables apart from sentence or word shortness that enhances readability. You therefore have to go by feel and experience.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Identify the proponents of the readability formulas and what criticism that have been leveled against them.

3.2 Readability Writing Benefits

Research in readability has shown that readable writing has the following main benefits.

1. People will be more likely to read what you write which is the joy or expectation of every writer. It means the ability of your write up to attract and hold the attention of the reader until he has finished the piece.
2. The reader will be more likely to understand it. It doesn't matter how informative your article is if nobody read or understands it.
3. Readable writing can be useful in conflict resolution and management. If it actually enhances comprehension and understanding, it means that it will increase communication effectiveness and reduce misinformation which is a major source of conflict.
4. Furthermore, readability can also enhance information process in the media. It is well known fact that the media and her personnel are always in a hurry because information is highly perishable. A lot of work goes into processing information for the mass media. Such time consumed or wasted trying to typeset a difficult to understand piece can be saved if the piece is readable.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss the benefits of readable writing?

3.3 Readability Engineering Strategies

According to Flesch (1970:141), there are various ways that a media writer can use to engineer readability into his writing. These keys or strategies according to Flesch are:

- Personal words which are any pronoun that refers to people, all nouns that suggest masculine or feminine gender like ‘father’ or ‘sister’ and words like ‘people’.
- Personal sentences are question, commands, and other sentences where the reader is addressed directly and sentence fragments where the full meaning has to be inferred from the context. This sound contradictory because writing for the mass media doesn’t permit much personal writing.
- Go for your material. Get all the information you need, pay special attention to little things that will add colour and human interest to your work.
- There must be a way for you to write something people are going to read, not just a heap of facts.
- Readability in media writing flourishes with a lot of narratives and a good deal of dialogue.
- Get yourself a dictionary of simple synonyms where words are explained by the simplest possible definition.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

List the strategies to impact readability on a write up.

3.4 Paragraphing Guidelines for Readability

You should follow these paragraphing suggestions amongst others to improve the appearance and readability of a write up.

1. Keep the first and last paragraph short, usually two to five lines each. It ensures effective entry and exit.
2. Keep middle paragraphs an average of four to eight lines in length and make them longer than the first and last paragraphs
3. Combine several short paragraphs to avoid a choppy appearance.
4. Avoid writing several long paragraphs following each other.

5. Avoid a top-heavy appearance i.e. beginning with paragraphs too long; avoid a bottom heavy appearance is ending with paragraphs too long.
6. Use an odd number of paragraphs.

Three (3) paragraphs look better than two (2) and five (5) paragraphs look better than four (4).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

What are the guidelines for effective paragraphing?

3.5 Practical Tips

You don't need to be a Thorndike to find simple synonyms to make your work readable. In this sub unit, we offer three lists of words to work with. If you use those three lists conscientiously and fully, your style will soon lose its heaviness.

- The first list consists of what Flesch (1972:144) calls empty words. These are particles – pre positions, conjunctions, adverbs, etc. Experience has shown that these words make up more than fifty percent of all the words you use. Any effort to write them down will be a rewarding and positive effort towards readability.
- The second list consists of auxiliary verbs. This one works on the principles that the more natural and idiomatic English gets, the more it expresses ideas by auxiliary verbs. These words occupy space and add nothing to original meaning. Here is some of them.

Aim to, be apt to; be known to; happen; have to:

- The third list is the longest. It is a list of simple verbs that describe movements of the human body, with a list of adverbs that can be combined with them. This list will only make your words simpler but with force you to streamline your sentences too. Here is some of the verbs.

Bear, blow, break, bring, carry, cant, catch, go, hang, look, keep, make, pull, push, shall, touch, walk work, etc.

ADVERBS

About, across, ahead, along, apart, aside, away, back, down, forth, of, out, over, up, under, together, etc.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Identify Flesch's practical tips, lists and explain them.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The art of readable writing is biogenic and socio genic. Most times writing is highly readable, article don't just happen. They are worked for and earned through consistent hard work on the part of the writer. Despite information explosion, chances are that the world is still under the chains of ignorance due to their inability to read enough. This has made it imperative for experts to experiment of the various formulas that can be used by media writers to sustain and expand the extend their write ups got read by the public.

5.0 SUMMARY

The application of these formulas to achieve readability depends on proper understanding of the main benefits of readable writing, how to bring readability about and how to apply the authorities in this field and use them with caution.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Discuss the contributions of Flesch and Gunning to readable writing.
- ii. List and discuss the various ways of ensuring the readability of a work.
- iii. What is a paragraphing and what are guides for writing it.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 SEMANTICS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Words and Things
 - 3.2 Unfamiliar Words
 - 3.3 Connotations
 - 3.4 Evaluative Words
 - 3.5 Parts of Speech
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Most of the obstacles and challenges you will have to overcome in writing for the mass media are related to the encoding-decoding process – how words are used to express meaning. You have to be sure that the meaning you intended in encoding the message survives the decoding bias. Experience teaches that in the cause of media writing, you should know how to ask pertinent question that clean up vagueness and to avoid glittering generalizations. On assignment, you must be sharp enough to ask the proper questions to clarify vague statements and define virtue or smear words. Often, if not always, this requires more than the usual amount of knowledge regarding the field of interest. All the readability formulas and other aids to good media writing cannot substitute for thorough fact finding. News sources and personalities have a way of tickling the media writer with high sounding words that mean or communicate nothing.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- differentiate between words and things
- discuss the levels of abstraction
- discuss the importance of context in media writing
- evaluative words.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Words and Things

One of the first things you will learn is that words should not be confused with the things they refer to. The word is a symbol that stands for the reality. No matter how close we come to describing reality with word, a gap between the word and the thing always remains. Good media writing tries to narrow the gap by making sure the words have obvious referents. The referent is the thing a word stands for. Avoid writing like this “The Police chased the robbers for two hours. They lost them at the Kings Square – ring road: who lost whom? If the audience has a clear notion of a word’s referent, communication should succeed. Words with vague referents are said to be abstract. Abstraction is one of the chief concerns of semanticists in media writing. The further away you get from the specific, the less sure you can be that someone will know what you are talking about. Ordinarily, the less abstract, the more specific and the better your audience will understand you. The importance of context must also come into place here. The words surrounding a word help to explain it. The meaning never resides in the word alone. Context also helps explain a word that might be unfamiliar to your reading public. Children acquire vocabularies by hearing words in context so that they learn what they mean. But you also have to be sure the meanings are the same to your audience as they are to you.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Identify and discuss levels of abstractions?

3.2 Unfamiliar Words

Words are the palm oil with which journalism is packaged and consumed. When the words are therefore out of the familiarity of the reading public, it becomes a problem rather than a solution to communication. As a writer if you are not conversant with the meaning of words and an expression, you can be fairly certain that a goodly number of your readers will need explanation of them. Perhaps you can even avoid use of the unfamiliar word in your story. With the world becoming more complex daily and the areas of specialization growing, the need for such explanatory journalism is increasing. Thorough reporting and writing is the best safeguard against the misuse of words. As we said earlier in this course, the subject matter of radio is not radio nor is the content of television, television. In the same way, the subject matter of Newspapers is

neither newspaper nor the content of magazine, magazine. Both these influential media devote their time and space to non broadcast ad non-print journalism, disciplines such as News, weather, music, sports, religion, agriculture, nature, fashion and drama. These areas have specialized language and technical words that need to be explained. The ability to write knowledgably is desirable in media writing because you are being evaluated by increasingly sophisticated readers. Nigerians are better informed today than in previous time. Intentional media are reaching more people with more messages than ever before. These readers can quickly spot clichés and gimmicks and lack of knowledge on the part of the writer.

The dramatic explosion of knowledge in the past several years will make inadequate for the 21st media writer who does not grow with the time. The makers of dictionaries have been adding new words to their editions at an unprecedented pace, each represents a new concept to know about and educate the people accordingly.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Explain what you understand by explanatory journalism.

3.3 Connotations

This has to do with the meanings your readers are likely to associate with the various words you used in your story. Because it is not certain how the readers are going to see the words, it is highly advisable to write as specific as possible. If for instance your source complain of “government interference” when he really means government “regulation” in a particular area, such words are loaded. Specific writing should lead to details rather than vague changes or mere name calling. If loaded words are used from some necessity, they probably should be included in quotations marks or some explanatory matter should be added to indicate the alternative words for the same thought.

Writing in his Chicago ‘Sun-Times’ column Sydney Harris in a piece entitled “More Antics with Semantics” demonstrates how emotions and sentiments colour our word use and choice with the following examples.

- Our secret agents are “patriots”, while their secret agents are nothing but “spies”.
- Our party’s plan shows we have “Vision” but their party’s plan makes them “wild-eyed dreams”.

- The British are too reserved and the French are too effusive, the Italian are too “impulsive”, the Germans are too arrogant and surely God must be from our country.
- My son hit yours over the head because he is playful, but yours hit mine over the head because he is vicious.
- When I spread gossip, it is a harmless “tidbit” but when you spread gossip, it is “malicious rumour mongering”.
- A realistic medium is a medium that agrees with the ideas of reality. I held before exposed to it.
- A sound man is a man who sounds like me, etc.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

What is a connotative meaning of words?

3.4 Evaluative Words

Another thing you will guard against as you write for the mass media is attempts to impose your views on your readers. There should rather be attempts to improve your readers understanding in the use of qualifying adjectives and other parts of speech and expression. Even some editors who have been opposing interpretative reporting have for years now allowed and encourage their writers using evaluative words under the new concept known as advocate journalism. It allows for expressions involving judgment. And to be socially responsible, the judgment must be based on adequate information. No competent media writer uses superlatives without investigating to determine whether they are justified. Competent reporting and integrity are more likely to give readers correct information than writing formulas.

Verbs you use must be exact. If a news source answers “Yes” to a question, it is not always proper to say he “admitted” something. When he makes an announcement, he can’t be said to have “revealed something unless the matter previously had been kept secret intentionally. “Change” is a strong word implying an accusation. “Claim” suggests that someone is trying to correct a wrong impression. A properly placed adverb can change the entire meaning of a news story. Evaluative phrases can make or break a write up and also, perhaps some of the principals mentioned in it.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

List and discuss the conditionalities for advocate journalism.

3.5 Parts of Speech

The parts of speech are Noun, Pronoun, Adjective, Verb, Adverb, Conjunction, Interjection, and Preposition. A strong knowledge of these and how they are applied in writing is important to a media writer. Below is an explanation of the parts of speech.

Adjective: An Adjective is a word which modifies a noun or pronoun. Certain adjectives are irregular at comparative and superlative form. E.g., good, better, best, bad, worse, worst. E.t.c.

There are some adjectives that are absolute and cannot be compared, e.g., dead, complete, and perfect. A thing cannot, logically be more or less dead or perfect or complete.

Adverb: An Adverb is a word which modifies a verb, an adjective or another adverb. E.g. The surrendering General very humbly handed the Captain his rather rusty pistol. Most adverbs end in “ly”, e.g, lovely, friendly, e.t.c.

Conjunction: A Conjunction is a word used to connect sentences or sentence parts. It can be in form of coordinating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions. A coordinating conjunction simply joins sentences and sentence parts of every rank. It includes and, but, for, or, nor, for. While subordinating conjunctions join sentence parts of unequalled rank. It includes, because, says, before, though, e.t.c

Interjection: An Interjection is a word used to exclaim or express a strong emotion. It has no grammatical connection with its sentence. Some of the most common interjections are, Oh, Ah, Ugh, Ouch

Noun: A noun is a word which names and which has gender, number and case. There are proper nouns, which name particular people, places or things. E.g. Benson Idahosa, Benin, Moat, e.t.c. We also have common nouns which name one or more of a group. E.g. Politician. We also have collective nouns like team, choir, committee, e.t.c. Also we have abstract nouns which name ideas, feelings, beliefs, e.t.c. And finally, concrete nouns which name things perceived through the senses. E.g., lemon, hatchet, e.t.c.

Preposition: A preposition is a connective which joins a noun or a pronoun to the rest of the sentence. A prepositional phrase maybe used as either an adjective or an adverb. E.g. Dan wore a coat of many colors. The preposition here is of, while object of preposition

is “colors”, and “of many colors” is the adjectival prepositional phrase. E.g.2 He leadeth me beside the still waters. The preposition here is beside, while the object of preposition is “waters”, and “beside the still waters” is the adverbial prepositional phrase.

Pronoun: A Pronoun is a word which stands for a noun. It can be in form of personal pronoun, demonstrative pronoun, reflexive pronoun, interrogative pronoun, indefinite pronoun, and relative pronoun e.t.c.

- A Reflexive pronoun is a pronoun ending in self and indicating that the subject acts upon itself. E.g., The butcher cut himself.
- Demonstrative pronoun is a word used to point out: this, that, those, these.
- Indefinite pronouns are pronouns not pointing out a particular person or thing. Some of the most common are: some, any, each, every, everyone, everybody, anybody, anyone, somebody, someone.
- Personal pronouns are words like: I, you, he, she, it, we, they, my, yours, hers, ours, and theirs.

Verb: A verb is a word or a group of words expressing action, being, or state of being. Example, The man killed the goat. E.g. 2. What is man? The fire has been built. The first sentence dealt with action, the second sentence dealt with being while the third one dealt with a state of being.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Identify and explain the parts of speech?

4.0 CONCLUSION

The challenges of media writing are the challenge of the encoding – decoding process. Semantics deals with word choice and usage in write ups. And as we said earlier on, words are the main tool for effective journalism. It is unthinkable for to succeed in journalism without knowing how to use words effectively. The media provides further education for the public. It does this by ensuring that words and their referents are properly identified in the write up. The whole problem of avoiding misinformation and disinformation depends on the writer’s knowledge level of semantics.

5.0 SUMMARY

A media may not aspire to take over the reading of semantics from English majors but he must be conversant in his media writing by applying the following: the difference between words and things; explain abstraction to the people, handle unfamiliar words effectively, etc.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. What is an abstraction in writing?
- ii. What is advocate journalism and what gave rise to it?
- iii. Discuss connotations extensively?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

MacDougall, O. Curtis, (1982). *Interpretative Reporting*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc.

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UNIT 5 CORRECT USAGE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Grammatical Faults
 - 3.2 Parts of Speech
 - 3.3 Troublesome Words
 - 3.4 Transitional Words and Phrases
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

To be a media writer is to be a user of words. It follows that every serious student of mass media writing will undertake a systematic study of correct and current English usage. It means making a lifelong habit of consulting dictionaries. It means becoming sensitized to the nuances of language and striving to find the precise rather than the approximate word. Unfortunately, most media writers are not perfect and our language suffers daily from a variety of errors in usage. It is presumed that the student has completed a course in English grammar and composition and, therefore, that he knows the rudiments of good English. This is important because a mass media writer who cannot make his subjects and predicates agree and who cannot spell ordinary words wouldn't last long. In every media house some rules of grammar, word usage and punctuation are emphasized more than others. Many issue style sheets for the guidance of new staff members as to what kind of writing is preferred.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify grammatical faults
- apply the parts of speech to media writing
- handle troublesome words
- insert transitional words and phrases accordingly.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Grammatical Faults

Journalism is one of the professions that have symbolic relationship with language. Good journalism promotes healthy language growth and without language, journalism is impossibility. A lot of people are going to depend on the mass media for further education. And the quality of education they get from the media determines the quality of public opinion. One of the variables to determine how effective or otherwise journalism has been is its relationship with language.

Below are some of the most common grammatical errors about which aspiring media writers need caution.

Wrong: Neither the Chairman nor the Secretary are willing to talk. When a sentence begins with Neither, Either, or a conjunction 'With' joins two nouns together, the verb is usually singular. In this case the right usage is: Neither the Chairman nor the Secretary is willing to talk.

Wrong: The Chamber of Commerce will begin their annual membership drive Monday. This sentence is wrong because there is no agreement between noun Chamber of Commerce and its gender. Usually collective nouns usually take neuter preposition. In this case, the right version of the sentence will be.

Right: The Chamber of Commerce will begin its annual membership drive Monday.

Others are

Wrong: Osagie is not as tall as Smart.

Right: Osagie is not so tall as Smart

Wrong: He gave it to Ehis and I

Right: He gave it to Ehis and me.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Describe the relationship between journalism and language.

3.2 Parts of Speech

To be able to write fresh and obtain originality of expression writers (not all of them media writers) sometimes change the part of speech of a word. In many cases the dictionaries have caught up with these popular usages. For instance, it is proper to say “chair a meeting”, “man the gate” “book a flight”, jail a prisoner”, “table a resolution”, etc. In media writing the practice of inventing verb form of nouns is widespread in view of the dynamic character of the language. It is not a taboo when a newspaper columnist says someone “week-ended” or “house-guested” another. In recent years such words as ‘babysit’ and ‘moonlight’ have come into common usage as verbs. The use of ‘-wise’ as a suffix (money wise, business wise, time wise, book wise, health wise) is still regarded as somewhat flippant, however, expressive. The congressional hearings of 1974 in America popularized many expressions and new usages that dictionaries have incorporated into use. For example, ‘Watergate’ and similar such expression that have become a synonym for political intrigues.

Special writers, who sign their stories, may be at liberty to invent unusual word usages. However, writers of formal media stories are more conservative and wait until the dictionaries have sanctioned an innovative word before using it.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Make ten (10) sentences with nouns being used as verbs.

3.3 Troublesome Words

No matter what the viewpoint regarding definitions, there can be no disagreement that words should be used to convey the meaning intended by their users. Caution, therefore, is advisable in deviating from standard usages. The following are some words and expressions that often cause difficulty to mass media writers and other writers alike.

A

Above: Should not be used for over or more than

Act: A single incident. An action consists of several acts.

Actual facts: This is redundant because all facts are actual

Administer: Used with reference to machine, government or Oaths. Blows are not administered but dealt.

Affect; Effect: Affect means to have an influence on; effect means to cause to produce, to result in.

Allow; permit: The former means not to forbid; but the latter means to grant leave.

Almost; nearly: Almost regards the ending of an act; nearly the beginning.

Alternative: Indicates a choice of two things. It is therefore incorrect to speak of two alternatives or one alternative.

Among: use when more than two is meant, for two only, use between.

Anxious: Implies worry. Not synonymous with eager which implies anticipation or desire.

Audience: An audience hears while spectators see.

Averse; Adverse: The former is an adjective meaning opposed to; the latter is an adjective meaning bad.

Avocation: A man's pleasure or hobby while vocation is his business or profession.

B

Balance: Not synonymous with rest or remainder

Banquet: Only a few meals are worth the name. Use dinner or supper instead.

Beside; Besides: The first means by the side of; the second, in addition to

Bloc: Means compartments while block means solid state.

C

Canon, cannon: The former is a law; the latter is a large gun.

Canvas; Canvass: The former is a cloth, the latter means to solicit.

Capitol; Capital: The building is the Capitol while the city is the Capital.

Collide: To collide means that both objects must be in motion.

Confess: A man confesses a crime to the police, but he does not confess to a crime. Don't say self-confessed.

Consist in: To be distinguished between consist in and consist of.

Continuous; continual: The former which either is always going on or recurs at short intervals and never comes (or is regarded as never coming) to an end. The latter which has no break occurs between the beginning and the end.

Correspondents; co-respondent: The former communicates in writing, the latter answers jointly with another.

Council; Counsel: The former is a meeting for deliberation; the latter is advice or one who gives advice.

Crime: Do not confuse with sin or vice. Crime is a violation of the Law of the State, vice refers to a violation of moral law, sin is a violation of religious law.

Consummation: Look up in the dictionary. Do not use in reference to marriage.

Cyclone: Distinguish from hurricane, typhoon tornado and storm.

D

Data is plural while Datum is the singular.

Depot: Don't use for station. A depot is a storehouse for freight or supplies; railways passengers arrive at a station.

Die of: Not die from

Drown: don't say that somebody was drowned unless it was murder, just say drowned if it is accidental.

E

Each other: one another: The former pertains to two, while the latter to three or more.

Emigrant: Do not confuse with immigrant. An emigrant leaves and an immigrant comes in.

Envelop; envelope: The former means to surround; the latter is a covering or wrapper.

Elicit: Means to draw out against the will.

F

Farther, Further: The former denotes distance while the latter denotes time.

Final; Finale: The former means last, the latter is a concluding act.

Fliers; Flyers: The former are aviators, the latter are handbills.

Flout; Flaunt: The former means scoff, the latter means to make ostentatious display.

G

Graduate: Universities graduate students are graduated.

H

Heart failure: Everyone dies of heart failure.

Had: Implies volition. Don't say "Had his arm cut off".

Hung: Clothes are hung on a line. A criminal is hanged.

I

Inaugurate: Does not mean begin

Incumbent: It is redundant to write – present incumbent.

Infer: Imply: The former means to deduce, the latter to signify.

Initial: A man may sign his initial, but he does not make an initial payment. He makes the first payment.

L

Last: Not synonymous with latest or past.

Locate: A building is located when its site is picked, therefore it is situated. A person if found not located.

Leave: Don't confuse with let.

M

Marshal; Marshall: The former is a title, the latter a proper name.

Media is plural: medium is singular.

Musical; Musicale: The former means rhythmic, but the latter is a recital or concert.

N

Name after; Name for: The former is British while the latter is American. All correct.

Nee: Give only last name: Mrs. Helen Obazee nee Basuaye.

O

Occur: Accidents occur rather than happen, but weddings take place.

Oral, verbal: The former emphasizes use of the mouth, the latter applies to either spoken or written words.

P

Past: No synonymous with last

Point out: Use when something is true or clear is not synonymous with assert.

Practically: Not synonymous with virtually different from almost.

R

Raised: Animals are raised, children are reared.

Render: You render a judgment, but you sing a song.

Rumour: It is redundant to write of unverified rumour.

S

Secure: Means to make fast. Don't use it for obtain, procure or acquire.

Sustain: Injuries are not sustained by received.

T

Transpire: Means to emerge from secrecy into knowledge, to become gradually known. Not to be used in the senses of happen, occur, etc.

Treble: Triple: The former means three times, the latter means three kinds.

U

Unknown; Unidentified: The former means not recognizable by anyone the latter means not yet recognized.

V

Various: Not synonymous with different.

Vendor; Vender: The former is a seller while the latter is a legal term.

W

Well-known: Usually widely known is meant.

While: Means at the same time, not synonymous with although.

Y

Yacht: Do not say private yacht. There are no public ones.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

What are the differences between fliers and flyers, beside and besides, flout and flaunt, drown and was drowned?

3.4 Transitional Words and Phrases

Transitional words and phrases provide connection between sentences and between paragraphs. Skillful use of transitional words and phrases can move the reader through the communication, from one idea to another without a break in continuity that could detract from the message.

The following are some common transitions you could use to show how items, ideas, or events are related to one another.

Indicate Sequence

After, as soon as, at present, at the same time, before, during, later, meanwhile, finally, etc

Show Location

Above, ahead, behind, below, higher, inside, outside, etc.

Compare or Contrast

Also, although, both, by contrast, even though, however, instead, likewise, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, similarly, still yet, etc.

Add Information

Also, and, another, as well, besides, despite, equally, important, further, furthermore, in addition, moreover, next, etc.

Provide an Example

For example, for instance, in particular, namely, such as, specifically, etc.

Add Emphasis

After all, again, especially, even more, for the purpose, indeed, in fact, more important, etc.

Indicate a Result or Conclusion

As a result, because of, consequently, finally, therefore, thus, etc.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

What are transitional devices?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Correct usage of language in journalism is a combination of various variables. The languages when media writers use it wrongly and the society is better for it when media writers use words correctly. A write up has many components and parts that must work together to achieve the good of the writing. By virtue of the enormous power that the media have in society, it necessary that media writers show how to use precise words rather than approximates.

5.0 SUMMARY

Correct usage is nobody's birthright: people work for it and earn it by overcoming grammatical faults, plastering parts of speech, handle troublesome words and use transitional devices.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Explain how language and journalism influence each other
- ii. Explain the following:
 - (a) Canon/Canon
 - (b) Beside/Besides
 - (c) Capitol/Capital

- (d) Envelop/Envelope
- (e) Unknown/Un-identified
- iii. Use transitional devices to indicate:
 - (a) Sequences
 - (b) Show location
 - (c) Add information

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