

The Language of Headlines

Headline-writing is considered a very skilled job . A good headline must:

- Fit the story and tell the reader clearly what it's about.
 - Make the reader interested in the story and want to read on.
 - On a front page, be visually striking enough to grab the eye of readers at stations, newsagents, newsstands, etc.
 - Reflect the newspaper's attitude to the news story.
 - Fit into a very limited space.
- Look at the classic headlines listed below.

**WHAT
A DI!**

**BOTTOMLEY IN
SMACKING ROW**

**Who d'you think
you're talking to,
Mrs Currie?**

**Hop off, you
frogs**

**Red faces
in school blaze
mercy dash**

Gotcha!

**SHE EVEN
CALLED MY
SICK GRAN
A N!%%N**

**OH GAWD!
She's here**

**DOES CHUCKY
LEAD TO
MURDER?**

WAR!

**JACKO
HAS
GONE
WACKO!**

No go in Soho

**CLARKE'S
BUMMER
FOR THE
SUMMER**

**Saucy Sarah's Sex Secrets
with Secretary of State**

**STICK IT
UP YOUR
JUNTA**

BLOWN IT

**KNICKERS
TO THE
BANK**

Headline Technique

Below is a list of some of the forms of language and techniques often used by headline writers.

Alliteration: repeating the same first letter or syllable (usually a consonant) in successive words to create a poetic or humorous effect (*Sexy Suzy's sausage surprise!*).

Assonance: repeating certain vowel sounds in the same phrase or sentence. (*Away Day for Gay Ray*)

Cliché: An over-used phrase or expression which has lost its originality - e.g. *Phew! What a scorcher!*

Euphemism: the use of a polite or pleasant form of words to describe something less pleasant, e.g. the little girl's room.

Exclamation: usually used to indicate surprise, sarcasm or amusement, e.g. Gosh!

Expletives: exclamation or swearword, usually expressing a strong emotion, and usually deleted or substituted by a less offensive word or sound.

Metaphor: implied comparison between two unconnected people or things.

Metonym: where the name of a specific object or idea stands for something else to which it is related or a part of. Thus, the Royal Family is often referred to as The Throne, or The Crown; 'the bottle' could mean milk or alcohol.

Mis-spellings words: deliberately mis-spelt for effect, e.g. Gawd for God.

Parody: an imitation of a well-known phrase or saying which is in some way distorted or changed.

Pun: a play on words, often with a double-meaning

Rhetorical question: a question to which no answer is expected.

Rhyming: words ending in identical sounds, e.g. Pix nix flix in stix.

Slang: words or phrases not considered part of standard English, e.g. fresh, cool, dread.

- **Read this list carefully.** Then try and match each form of expression up with a headline which uses that particular technique to make its meaning.
- **Look back at the list of headlines and try to work out who each headline is talking to.** With a partner, take it in turns to read each headline aloud. Experiment with different dialects, tone of voice, and timing to emphasise the tone and intention of each headline. See how many different meanings you can give each headline by changing your tone of voice and emphasis.
- **Now read the following outline story.**

Top pop singer Madonna has announced her intention to give up her controversial and massively successful musical career in order to attend university and retrain as a doctor.

- **With a partner, try and create three different headlines of your own for the story.** Each of your three headlines should:
 - a) be written for a different newspaper (don't forget to say which - although it should be fairly clear from your choice of language)
 - b) use one of the techniques from the list above, in order to present the story in a different way.
- **Read the following headline.** Work out what kind of news item you think it refers to, and write the first paragraph of the accompanying story.

**DOC KNOCKS FROCKS
IN FLU SHOCKS**

Headlines: Filling the Space

Editors decide on the size of a headline after the story is written. They need to think about how important the story is: the bigger the story, the bigger the size of the headline. And the bigger the size, the fewer the letters that can be fitted into the space available.

Here is a list of short-cut words and phrases often used in headlines to keep the letter-count down.

Pick three of them, and for each one, invent a made-up headline of your own (it can be about anything, and as silly as you wish).

boss
row
flee
quit
probe
sleaze

swoop
mercy dash
boss
axe
video nasty
menace

rap
fling
bid
ban
nightmare
blast

Now swap your headlines with a partner. Each of you should invent and then write your own first paragraph of the news story which follows each headline and explains its significance. Compare notes. Was your partner able to interpret your headlines appropriately, and vice versa?

Learning News Language

In the middle of the night last night, some burglars broke into Buckingham Palace and got away with a whole heap of the Queen's most valuable jewellery as well as kidnapping her favourite corgi whose name was Tootles and who slept in the Queen's bedroom with her. The Queen wasn't

actually around that night as she was away on her tour of Japan with Prince Philip, but her ladies-in-waiting were, and they were terrified and extremely worried about Tootles who is quite old and needs a special diet so he does not get too overweight.

Here is a simple news story which would *not* have appeared in a national newspaper.

Read it carefully. Then, with a partner, try and rewrite the story so that it could be published on the front page. One of you should rewrite the story for a tabloid newspaper, and the other for a broadsheet newspaper. **When you have finished** your rewritten versions, try and work out exactly what you did with each one to make them printable.

Make a list of all the changes you made, and why you made them.

Nine Golden Rules of News-Speak

Most newspapers have their own style book - a policy statement which lists all the different rules about the styles of writing, spelling and language used for the newspaper. This is so that all articles will follow the same standard rules, and the paper's 'house-style' will be instantly recognisable. The list of rules below are examples of the advice style books give about how - and how not - to write news stories. Read them carefully; you will soon be needing them in some newspaper writing of your own.

1. KISS

This stands for **Keep It Short and Simple**. It is used in a book called *The Newspapers Handbook*, a useful guide for students of journalism, which points out that short sentences are better for news. Broadsheet newspapers usually have sentences of 30 - 35 words; tabloids and local papers normally carry shorter sentences of 16 - 20 words. Stay as close to popular speech as you can, and keep to familiar, simple words; as Harold Evans, the famous editor who popularised the *Sunday Times* and *Times*, wrote:

'Sentences should be full of bricks, beds, houses, cars, cows, men and women.'

- Check the news story you have just written. Did you KISS it?

2. Reading for Speed

Everything about a newspaper is set up to enable you to read it fast.

Sentences and **headlines** are short, **crossheads** between paragraphs break the story down into bite-sized pieces, **columns** are narrow and easy to read. **Words** should be short too.

- Can you find briefer ways of saying the following?

The constabulary was able to demonstrate that the alibi of the defendant was inadequate.

It was approximately twelve noon when the suspect was apprehended.

A mobile phone is an accessory typical of a young upwardly mobile person.

She subscribed unequivocally to dedicated support of Take That.

3. Never Use Three Words When One Will Do

Here are some **phrases** which you would rarely see in a newspaper - they're too wordy.

- Can you think of the shorter version using only one word for each phrase?

In the near future

In the first instance

On the subject of

In the small hours

In consequence of

4. Don't Repeat Yourself

Keep things short by making sure of the following:

Don't use **two words** which mean the same - eg. uniquely special, important essentials, final outcome.

Try not to **repeat** a word in the same sentence.

Avoid words like very, quite, rather - they're unnecessary and don't add anything to the meaning.

5. Use Active Verbs

'Burglars took the corgi' works better than 'The corgi was taken by the burglars' - and it's shorter.

- Try re-writing the following sentences to make them more active - and easier to read.

- It was agreed by the Committee that a working party be set up to explore opinions of the public on the prevention of vandalism.
- The truth was told by the youth, but only after considerable pressure was exerted over him by the arresting officers.

6. Play With Language - Use Lots Of Puns

In 1952, journalists at the *Daily Express* were told by their proprietor, Lord Beaverbrook, that he intended to ban the use of puns in headlines and text. He failed; puns are too much fun, and readers enjoy them too much. Forty years on, we're still groaning at them, and these days they're almost as frequent in broadsheet papers as they are in tabloids.

- Read the two paragraphs below, and underline where there are puns in each one. Talk about how they work, and what makes them funny (or not, as the case may be).

<p>BY GUM! THOSE BOOKIES FACED A STICKY PROBLEM</p> <p>One hundred London bookmakers faced a sticky situation when a quick-drying superglue was used to seal their front doors, it was disclosed yesterday.</p> <p>Last night they were adhering to a theory that it could have been Scottish football fans on their way to Wembley, who had gummed up the works last Saturday...</p>	<p>CHIPPY GETS A BATTERING</p> <p>The fat was in the fire when fish and chip shop owner John Rose fancied cod and chips on his night off.</p> <p>He claimed his portion of cod was just warmed up. A row started... and Rose began battering the other chippy.</p>
--	---

(Articles originally reproduced in *Daily Mirror Style*, Keith Waterhouse, 1981)

- Now rewrite your news story about the Queen's burglary and missing corgi, in true punning style. See how many puns you can fit in and still make sense.

7. Make the Story Personal

News often tries to **simplify events** to make the facts easier to understand. One way of doing this is to link the news story to a **particular person**. For example, in reporting the devastating 1995 earthquake in Kobe, Japan, many papers chose to 'personalise' the event by telling the story of particular victims or survivors, mainly British students, with whom their readers can identify. In reporting problems in the National Health Service, journalists often look for a heartbreaking story of a child whose life is at risk without expensive private treatment.

	<p>THE TAPES OF DEATH <u>'Hurry, please hurry'</u></p> <p>A family's vain plea for an ambulance to save their dying daughter.</p> <p>A dying girl was left screaming in agony for nearly an hour as her family tried to summon an ambulance. Nasima Begum may have survived if only the Government had sorted out the cash crisis in Britain's hardest-hit emergency service.</p> <p>TODAY has obtained a harrowing 999 tape, punctuated by 11-year-old Nasima's screams, which shows how</p>
---	--

muddle and shortages within the London Ambulance Service added to her suffering. The savage indictment of Government health policy - which under the Patient's Charter is meant to guarantee an ambulance within 14 minutes - comes as Labour presents its vision for the NHS at the party conference today.

On the tape, Nasima's brother is heard crying out: 'Hurry, please hurry, she's sick, she's sick. Where are you?'

(Today, 6th October 1994)

- Take the 'Tapes of Death' story and rewrite it in two ways for the opening paragraphs of an article arguing for better funding and staffing for the London Ambulance Service.
 - a) First write the opening of the story for a **broadsheet** newspaper referring only indirectly to the example quoted in the story, and leaving out names and details. Suggest a headline and ideas for any illustrations that might accompany your report.
 - b) Now rewrite the opening for another **tabloid** paper, making the story even *more* personal. Try arranging the information in a different order to see whether this helps.
- Now compare your two openings. Which one is more effective in arguing the case?

8. Categorise People In The News

In the tabloid and middle-market newspapers, people are the most important currency - often as important as the news events themselves. Look back to the coverage of Jean Kierans and John Major. Here is a list of the different ways in which Jean Kierans was described by the press over two days in February 1995:

Grey-haired pensioner	Divorcee
Secret lover	Sultry beauty
The driving force behind Major's rise from oblivion to Downing Street	Mother of two
Retired teacher, 65	Beautiful brunette
Loyal	Woman who put Premier on path to power
	Ex-lover

- With a partner, discuss how each phrase might create a different slant on Mrs Kierans' relationship with John Major.

9. Things to Avoid

Almost every newspaper style book contains a list of 'don'ts' - forms of language which a good writer should avoid. But when you actually look at the writing in the paper, it seems as if very few reporters take much notice.

- How many of the following have you spotted recently in a tabloid or broadsheet newspaper?
- Can you think of any more features of front-page writing you find irritating or ineffective?

<p>Clichés - <i>Don't get your knickers in a twist</i> about phrases like <i>ashen-faced</i> Mr Major; <i>miraculous escape</i>; <i>love-child</i>; <i>Phew what a scorcher</i>; <i>my night of passion</i>; and so on.</p> <p>Opposition - Many stories - especially political or military ones - rely on language which implies conflict or extremes - eg. <i>hawks/doves</i>, <i>East/West</i>, <i>us/them</i>, <i>Tory wets and dries</i>, <i>Loony Left/soft Left/hard Right</i>.</p> <p>Euphemisms - Call a spade a spade (however much of a cliché!) - wherever possible, avoid such phrases as: <i>vertically challenged</i> = short; <i>rationalisation</i> = job losses; <i>terminally ill</i> = dying. Many such euphemisms have now become absorbed into everyday speech.</p> <p>Word making - Many editors get particularly</p>	<p>annoyed by writers who go overboard on the invention of new words from names or ideas with prefixes and suffixes - e.g. <i>Blairmania</i>, <i>Euronews</i>, <i>adspeak</i>.</p> <p>Being too chatty - There may be room for a gossipy tone inside the paper, but rarely on the front page; editors get very cross about phrases which are too informal and trivialise the subject-matter, e.g.: <i>The world's cuddliest Granny</i>, <i>the Queen Mum</i>, <i>had tea with some elderly survivors of the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz today</i> - and haven't they all done well?</p> <p>Unnecessary use of foreign or American phrases - <i>C'est la vie</i>; <i>downtown</i>; <i>fracas</i>; <i>rendezvous</i>, etc. Many readers think this sort of language is un-British - we should be preserving the English language, rather than diluting it with foreign words and phrases.</p>
--	--

Sources Of Evidence

Who Said What, To Whom, And How?

One way of investigating the accuracy of a news report is to look at:

- The people who are quoted in it
- Whether their names are given or not
- The way they are described
- Whether the words they use are fact or opinion
- Whether quotation marks are used or not.

1. Indirect quotes

Baroness Thatcher was said to be ‘absolutely shattered’ last night by allegations about her son Mark’s role in a £20 billion arms deal she secured.

A close friend said: ‘I have never seen her more depressed.’

(Daily Mail, 11th October 1994)

- **Read the extract quoted above, and discuss what you think about the following:**
 - What Mrs Thatcher actually said
 - The reliability of ‘the close friend’?
 - Why ‘the close friend’s’ name was not given?
 - Whether the newspaper is sympathetic to Mrs Thatcher’s alleged depression?
- **Now look at the front page article** about Princess Diana in the *Daily Express*. Under the appropriate headings given below, write in the words and phrases which show the following:

Facts which can be proved	Use of direct quotes	Reveal Hewitt to be untrustworthy	Diana’s point of view

- **Compare your lists with other people’s.**
In fact, the only actual quotes in the article come from Anna Pasternak’s book, and from ‘a friend’ of Diana’s, whose name is not revealed.



ROYAL traitor Major James Hewitt claimed yesterday he had a five-year affair with Princess Diana.

He says they made love at Kensington Palace, Highgrove, at Diana’s family estate Althorp and in Devon.

Details of their “grand passion” are revealed for the first time by journalist Anna Pasternak, with Hewitt’s full co-operation, in the kiss-and-tell book *Princess in Love*.

It describes how Diana believed the Life Guards officer, now dubbed Britain’s biggest bounder, was someone to trust after Prince Charles rejected her.

“She had recognised it instantly. Here was a man, finally, whom she could rely on,” it adds.

But last night Diana was said to have told close friends: “I have never slept with Hewitt.” One friend said: “The Princess is telling people James made it all up. She is very upset and angry over these allegations.”

Hewitt was obsessed with Diana and everything he has said is a product of “his fevered imagination. . . a lot of what Hewitt says in the book has been embellished,” the friend added. The Princess regards the book as the “ultimate betrayal” and is said to feel deeply hurt and bitterly disappointed. Hewitt even claims Diana was so in love she planned to leave Charles for Hewitt.

The book says: “She told him how she wanted to marry him, how she yearned to have his child.”

Daily Express 4.10.94

2. Interpreting the Evidence

The use of witnesses and sources of evidence in news reporting is complicated.

Here are some ways of describing quotations, opinions or comment, together with an explanation of how to interpret the evidence.

Does it mean what it says?	
What it says:	What it means:
a) On the record	a) Entirely straight information and opinion which can be substantiated
b) Off the record	b) Information has been given, but should not be reported direct because of its sensitive nature
c) Sources close to...	c) Reliable information or opinion given by people who don't want their names revealed
d) A close friend of... An anonymous source The names of the men/women have been changed...	d) Witnesses want to help but aren't reveal their identity for fear of reprisal, or of public knowledge of their intimate personal circumstances.

3. Descriptions Of Witnesses

In the coverage of the Princess Di and James Hewitt story, James Hewitt is described in a variety of ways:

Money-grabbing James Hewitt; Love-rat (*The Sun*)
Kiss-and-tell cavalryman James Hewitt (*Daily Mail*)
Royal traitor Major James Hewitt (*Express*)
Former Cavalry Officer Major James Hewitt (*Guardian*)

- What impression is created by each phrase?
- What is the effect of putting the description first and the name last?
- Which of these descriptions can be proved to be truthful?

4. Whose Side Are They On?

Check out exactly whose words or opinions have been used in an article.

In the story above, how many times has James Hewitt, or any of his friends or colleagues, been quoted? What effect does this have on your understanding of the story?

5. Reliable Sources?

Where a story is leaked from an unattributed (i.e. deliberately anonymous) source to a newspaper about a sensitive government issue, special care has to be taken before the story is released. Editors have to weigh up the public's right to have such information, with the possible damage such a leak might have on delicate negotiations. Where no source is prepared to be identified, journalists need to be particularly careful on behalf of their paper's reputation.

On 1st February 1995, *The Times* leaked details from a secret document on the future relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This was particularly sensitive information which could seriously damage the peace process negotiations which at that time were being held between Westminster and the Republic. It even prompted John Major to make an emergency TV Party Political Broadcast to calm things down. But the main fuss was caused because Matthew d'Ancona, the *Times* Deputy Editor who wrote up the story, not only refused to reveal the source of the leak, but was also a self-confessed supporter of the Union, and therefore assumed likely to have a biased viewpoint on the negotiations. In defence of the article, the *Times* said:

'Newspapers have a general responsibility to print the truth unless there is an absolutely compelling reason not to do so.'

- How far do you agree with this statement?

6

Tabloidese

Tabloidese, that tough-guy, hat-on-the-back-of-the-head talk that makes the newspapers sound like James Cagney (RAP, PROBE, BID, SWOOP, AXE) was devised to accommodate the largest type to the smallest page.

Partly inspired by the back-numbers department of the *New York Daily News* (a newspaper which still uses a squeeze-bulb plate camera as its logo) and by old Death Row movies, it is essentially a made-up language, a kind of primitive Esperanto where nouns, verbs and adjectives are interchangeable. So long as readers are well-versed in this Esperanto, it is a useful - indeed an essential - headline aid. But is it always comprehensible? Do those who habitually ask, 'Will our readers in Wigan understand this?' ever ask if Wigan readers can follow, for instance:

JAIL THREAT TO DRUG ROW STONE

That headline (from *The Sun*) is made up of five nouns and one preposition. At least one reader, grasping at straws, seized on *to* and thought he had found a verb: *to drug*. From this he concluded that there was a jail threat, i.e. a threat by the jail, to drug a row Stone. What was a row Stone? Presumably a Rolling Stone involved in a row. Very well: a jail threatens to drug (with tranquillisers?) a Rolling Stone either involved in a quarrel or making a noise.

The text suggests a different interpretation: A Rolling Stone, Keith Richards (*Stone*) was given what the Canadian Justice Department believes to be a lenient suspended sentence for a drug offence (*drug row*) and they want him put in prison (*jail threat*). Having worked that out, the reader from Wigan (or the Bronx) may now pit his wits against this *Mirror* headline:

TORCH BOY SET ABLAZE BY GANG

Set ablaze by gang is clear enough, but what is a *torch boy*? It can only be a boy who has been set ablaze. So if the Esperanto headline were translated into something approaching English, it would read:

ABLAZE BOY SET ABLAZE BY GANG

Is the headline **TRIPLE LOVE-SNATCH BOY IS HUNTED** any relation to **TORMENT OF A LOVE-TUG MUM**? Do we all understand, without reference to the story, that a *triple lovesnatch boy* is one who has been seized by his father, from his mother, for the third time? Do we have some idea what a *love-tug* mum is? If so, does it confuse us or enlighten us when in the first paragraph of the accompanying story she becomes a *love-tug wife*?

Until present trends are reversed and tabloids start going broadsheet, there will always be a demand for short bold words to fit big bold headlines. There is no reason why these should not be 'label' words, found nowhere else in the language - a label, after all, is precisely what the headline is. But as any reputable patent medicine manufacturer would agree, a label must tell the consumer clearly what is in the bottle. If it doesn't, it is a case of either quackery, flimflam or incompetence.

But what of tabloidese 'label' words that - seemingly with the same territorial ambitions as puns - have slunk down from the headline to the text? What are they doing there? The average news story, after all, is not set in 144 point. True, space is always at a premium, but is it at such a premium that the reader must have his Esperanto dictionary at the ready?

Doctors and ambulance men slammed yesterday...

Diesel train services are to be axed by British Rail in a desperate bid to save fuel...

A lonely old peer lured young girls into bed for sex romps...

A call for Britain to take in more Vietnamese boat people was made yesterday...

A blaze superstore has told its till girls, 'Dump the money and run for your lives'...

It could be argued that most of these words have been used (overused?) so often that readers know exactly what they mean. Probably so, in the headline sense. But what, outside the headlines, is a *sex romp*? What is a *blaze superstore*? Who are *till girls*? Why, if these words are now so common, are they not in common use? Why do we not hear housewives at bus-stops saying 'Our Marlene used to be a till-girl at that blaze superstore' or 'Did I tell you about young Fred being rapped after he slammed his boss? He thinks he's going to be axed'? Words that have never managed to get into the mainstream of the language are suspect as a means of popular communication.

They are, and remain, labels. They do not convey precise meanings. The reader looks at the label, opens the tin - and finds a tin of labels.

Tabloidese is essentially *passive*. In tabloid-land, *400 jobs face axe*. In real life, 400 men may lose their jobs. Intended to be dramatic, tabloidese has a curiously deadening effect. *A pay war loomed last night* is not dramatic because it has all the ingredients of drama except the players — the story does not come to life until we know who is involved in it. ☺

Writing Assignments

1. Tabloid vs. Broadsheet - or Popular vs. Quality?

Tabloid newspapers have often been accused of being sensational - a term of abuse when aimed at the press. But the comments below, published in the early 1950s on the front page of the *Daily Mirror* by the editor, Sylvester Bolam (Editor 1948-1953) suggest some of the more positive aspects of sensationalism.

'The *Mirror* is a sensational newspaper. We make no apology for that. We believe in the sensational presentation of news and views, especially important news and views, as a necessary and valuable public service in these days of mass readership and democratic responsibility.

We shall go on being sensational to the best of our ability...

Sensationalism does not mean distorting the truth. It means the vivid and dramatic presentation of events so as to give them a forceful impact on the mind of the reader. It means big headlines, vigorous writing, simplification into familiar, everyday language, and the wide use of illustration by cartoon and photograph...

As in larger, so in smaller and more personal affairs, the *Mirror* and its millions of readers prefer the vivid to the dull and the vigorous to the timid.

No doubt we make mistakes, but we are at least alive.'

Do you agree with these views - and do they still hold good with the tabloid newspapers of today?

Use this statement as a starting point for an analysis of the style, language and layout in *either*

- a) *The Sun* or
- b) a middle-market tabloid such as the *Daily Mail* or *Today*.

You might find it useful to organise your ideas using the following headings - not necessarily in this order.

- Readership - who is the newspaper talking to?
- Overall layout and design of front page - and why it is important.
- Use of photographs - selection, cropping, captioning, etc.
- Use of headlines - size, language, tone of voice.
- Selection of stories - news values, priorities, newsworthiness.
- Editorial viewpoint - political loyalties, approach to issues, etc.
- Ownership and connections with other media - how far does the ownership and other interests of the newspaper influence the sorts of stories and viewpoints it covers?
- The marketing and promotion of the paper.
- The appeal of the paper for its readers.

For each of the points you make, you should try and include an example from a copy of your chosen paper. You could include annotated cuttings and extracts to illustrate your ideas more visually.

2. Yours Faithfully, Disgusted of Cheltenham

You now know quite a lot about the way to read newspaper language, the house style of different publications, and the readability of different papers. Now it's your chance to offer some views of your own.

- **Choose a paper** whose language and style interests you, whether favourably or unfavourably.
- **Write a letter to the Editor** of your chosen newspaper in which you **either**:
 - a) congratulate her/him on providing such a readable and well-organised paper
 - or b) complain to her/him about the level of readability which makes it harder for readers to understand the articles
 - or c) select an article or story you feel is difficult to make sense of, or written in a particularly biased way, and explain your objections to it.

Whichever you do, make sure that for every point you make, whether praising or criticising, you draw an example from the newspaper itself. Newspaper editors want evidence as well as opinions.

Read the following advice first before you start:

- Letters to newspaper should always include your own name and address.
- Write on only one side of the sheet, leaving lots of space around the margins.
- You should start formally, 'Dear Sir or Madam', and finish with 'Yours faithfully'.
- The more concise and clearly argued your letter, the more likely it is to be published.
- Keep re-editing your letter to make sure that you don't repeat yourself and have made your points without waffle. An editor will simply cut and delete any paragraphs which are unnecessarily lengthy; although s/he must be careful not to change the meaning of your letter, s/he won't bother to protect your brilliant writing style.

3. And Here is The News, Sponsored By...

Later you will be considering the relationship between newspaper and television news - their reliance on each other, the sources of their information, and the differences in their delivery. For this practical assignment, you will be working with another news medium - radio.

- **Your local radio station is to run news broadcasts** sponsored by national newspapers, in which all the news is taken from a single daily edition of the paper.
Your group is to produce a three-minute local radio news broadcast based entirely on news from one day's edition of one of the following:
 - *The Sun*
 - *The Daily Mail*
 - *The Guardian*
 - *The Telegraph*.

The Rules:

- **Your broadcast must run for exactly three minutes** on air, including the signature tune, and any credits or further information you wish to add.
- **All news and editorial opinion must come from the edition of your chosen paper** . You should re-write some of the stories to make them clearer or briefer, but you should keep to the style and tone of the original language.
- **Your broadcast should include:**
 - At least one news reader, with an appropriate style and delivery
 - At least one interview
 - Introductory headlines, using the paper's familiar format
 - At least four news items
 - An appropriate signature tune - chosen to 'match' the 'personality' created by your chosen newspaper. (e.g., if you were broadcasting the *Times*, you might chose Pavarotti, or something classical; if you were doing the *Daily Star*, you could use something by Benny Hill or Right Said Fred)

When you have recorded your broadcast (for exactly three minutes, not a second more or less), in your groups:

- **Compare** all the different broadcasts produced by the class.
- **Discuss** the ways in which you might approach the task the next time.
- **Write** an evaluation which discusses :
 - The way your group selected and presented its stories
 - How you worked together as a team
 - The effect of translating your news stories from print to sound
 - How effectively you recreated the 'feel' of your newspaper.

Reading a TV News Broadcast

A. The Language

The Titles

- What images and sounds from the title sequence stand out in your mind?
 - What do they suggest about 'The News' in general?
 - What do they suggest about this particular news programme?
- ### Headlines
- What impression do we get from the main headlines in terms of:
- The information they give
 - The language they use
 - Their tone of voice and the way they talk to the viewer
- ### The Graphics
- What sorts of visuals, graphics and other non-filmed material are employed?
 - How are they used? Why are they used in specific items?
 - What do they add in helping us to understand the story?

The VT footage

- What different sources of film or video footage can you identify?
- Where does it come from? specially shot; old TV material; library footage; material from other countries' media?
- What does it add?

Reporters

- What is the status of the reporters involved in different news stories?
- Are they seen in-camera or heard as voice-over
- What sorts of people are the reporters - age, sex, appearance, race, accent?
- Where are they? What can you tell from their location and comments?

The Interviews

- Who is interviewed in each item? What is their status, gender, age, role in news issue?
- What are they doing for the report? Do they provide new information, comment, an alternative point of view, background to past events, or just a space-filler?

The Narrative

- In which order do news stories appear and why?
- What different types of news stories appear in this broadcast?
- Which stories are self-contained? On-going from yesterday? Unexpected developments? Light relief?

B. The Audience

The Structure

- What is the 'shape' of the broadcast?
 - What techniques does the broadcast use to tell the viewer which stories are the most important?
 - How does the sequence of items keep the viewer interested?
 - How might the news differ if scheduled at a different time of day?
- ### The Links
- How does the presenter introduce the item to come?
 - Is the item presented as serious, human interest, the funny story, etc.
- ### The Goodnight
- How do the closing remarks 'wrap up' the events of the day and summarise them for us?

C. The Production Process

The Producers

- Which channel produced this broadcast?
- Who was responsible for the production?
- When was it scheduled, and for what sorts of audiences?

The Technology

- What use is made of live phone-links; simultaneous reports, lightweight camera technology, etc.

The Limitations

- What do they add to our understanding of the different items?
- How do you think individual items might be affected by the availability of news crews, pictures, time constraints, budget, etc?

D. Representations of the World

News values

- What is the significance of each item chosen?
- What makes each item newsworthy?

Whose news are we getting?

- What sorts of items are not included in the news?
- What sorts of people, places, issues are not included?

The Agenda

- Whose selection of news are we getting?
- Who stands to benefit from each of the different news items?
- What might individual items mean to different sorts of audiences

The Viewpoint

- What messages about the world do we get from the broadcast as a whole?
- What impressions do we get of different groups, countries, or governments?