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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

IMPROVING HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS: HEALTH JOURNALISM TRAINING

CURRICULUM

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This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Manisha Aryal, Resident Journalism Advisor and Nabeela Aslam, Training and Research Coordinator, Internews Network, for Technical Assistance for Capacity Building in Midwifery, Information and Logistics (TACMIL) Health Project.

IMPROVING HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS: HEALTH JOURNALISM TRAINING CURRICULUM

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Reporting on Mother and Newborn Child Health Issues in Pakistan

In the first decade of the new millennium, media in Pakistan has grown enormously as a powerful source of information, education and entertainment, and a key influencer in decision making for individuals, families, organizations and governments. Pakistan's 160 million people are increasingly sourcing information from electronic media, print media, as well as more traditional community networks including family, friends and mosques. These sources can inform and influence decisions on basic community and family issues such as livelihoods and education but particularly health.

While more information is available today and more information is being consumed than ever before in Pakistan, there are distinct patterns of consumption and quality of information available across the country. Whereas the urban areas, in general, are relatively better placed in terms of access to quality and quantity of information on thematic subjects – such as health, education, environment, business, etc., – the situation in the rural areas and at the local level in the districts, particularly the generally under-developed districts where TACMIL aims to improve the MNCH [mothers, newborns and child healthcare] situation, is beset with problems relating to both information quality & quantity and access & relevance.

The coverage of health related issues in general and MNCH issues in particular is a major problem at the district level media. There are several reasons for this: relatively lower literacy rate, access to information within government institutions, fewer quality media organizations based in the districts, fewer journalists available to generate consistent coverage, general lack of training opportunities for journalists to improve professionalism, inadequate coverage of local issues, lack of orientation among local journalists on thematic issue such as health, as well as non-prioritization of health as a mainstream issue in part due to a lack of capacity within the local media establishments.

However, growing awareness among local populations on general issues based on increasing consumption of mainstream current affairs television channels – that are now also available in regional languages such as Balochi, Pashto, Punjabi, Seraiki and Sindhi – means at least they are ready to seek and consume information on thematic subjects such as health and MNCH from local media, which is otherwise not available on national media, provided the information is (i) available locally, (ii) in local languages, and (iii) relates to local conditions and issues – and thereby is not just sundry information but relevant information.

It is in this backdrop that TACMIL has arranged for quality trainings to build the capacity of journalists and media at the district level so that more quality information on the MNCH issue – a matter of life and death in regions where healthcare facilities are generally inadequate – is available in the local context, to make it more relevant for local communities so they can benefit from it. The trainings are also an effort to 'mainstream' local media and improve the inputs required to bring it on a par with national mainstream media.

Pakistan's growing media – which is feeding a healthy hunger for relevant and reliable information – represents a great opportunity for health sector stakeholders in general, and

MNCH professionals and practitioners in particular, to help the people of Pakistan's far-off, under-developed districts to improve their health situation. Because the new media is now reaching more areas than ever in Pakistan after five decades of relative information darkness, important in particular is the role of public officials, who have large amounts of very useful information, such as public health officials at the district level, to help educate the people on health issues, as well as the local media, whose greater capacity to cover health issues can improve the health situation at the district level.

ABOUT THE TRAINING

Preparation

Internews has developed skills in the delivery of health information workshops and health journalism training courses across the globe. Internews' trainings are hands-on and include content and activities which are highly practical and based on professional journalistic principles and practices. This course in Pakistan is a five-day intensive training, led by Internews Network's Resident Journalism Advisor and the in-country training team. The training method is a combination of lectures, presentations, discussions, assignments, in-class practical exercises, etc. that are designed to re-enforce concepts that the training addresses.

Components

The course will help journalists understand and learn how to research, report and write news stories related to Mother and Newborn Child Health issues. The course also includes interview skills. As part of the training, journalists will interview health experts, government officials and others involved in providing healthcare to women and newborn children. Journalists will also learn to write feature stories mostly based in TACMIL districts on MNCH issues. This 5-day course is intensive and practical and will require journalists to be present at all times. The participants will be required to complete reading assignments, participate in class activities and group discussions, and to use the skills they have learned to research, write and get print-ready stories out to their newspapers.

Use of Health and Demographic Information

Relevant health data is used in the workshop and participants are invited to source and use demographic information to underpin the key messages in health stories. Primary information sources include the 2006-07 Pakistan Demographic Health Study, key fact sheets, as well as the Population Welfare Program Reports, the Pakistan Initiative for Mothers and Newborns and the National Institute for Population Studies,

Key Outcomes

The key understandings the participants will take away from this course will be how to pitch, peg and present news stories and features on MNCH issues. Learning outcomes will be demonstrated by participants during group activities, class discussions and individual work. During the course of the training, the participants will work on:

A three to five hundred word news item on a key MNCH issue (print-ready on Day 2)

An interview of a key health expert or official on MNCH issue (print-ready on Day 3)

An outline of a feature story that participants will work on after the training (outline to be ready on Day 4), to be followed up with a reporting plan.

TRAINING SCHEDULE: 2nd Health Journalism Training: Bhurban

Sessions: 1.5 hours each

Tea Breaks: 15 minutes each

Lunch Break: 1 hour

Day 1 (Monday, 30th March , 2009)		
Time/Duration	Activity Description	Resources
09:30 – 11:00	Opening and Welcome Introduction of participants Training Rules / Training Logistics Participants' expectations (Whiteboard) Introduction: TACMIL health project Introduction and orientation on Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2006-07, MDGs 4 & 5 and related MCH issues	Internews/Trainer Self Introduction Internews/Trainer Internews/Trainer Ms. Umbreen Salim Communications Advisor, TACMIL health project, Dr. Zafarullah Gill, COP, TACMIL Health Project
11:00 – 11:15	Tea Break	
11:15 – 12:45	Demographic Health Survey Understanding MCH and women's reproductive health issues	Copies of PDHS
12:45 – 13:45	Lunch Break and Prayers	
13:45 – 15:15	Assessment of media's role in covering mother & newborn issues (sharing)	Round Table Discussion/Session
15:15 – 15:30	Tea Break	
15:30 – 17:00	Qualities of News 5 Ws and 1 H of Health Reporting Ethics of Health Reporting	Presentation and Discussion (Internews) Exercises 1, 2, 3
Notes	<i>Assignment 1: Identify news story from PDHS. The participants will work on a 500 word-long print-ready story the next day.</i>	

Day 2 (Tuesday, 31th March , 2009)		
Time/Duration	Activity Description	Resources
09:30 – 11:00	Understanding and Presenting MNCH issues and terms in journalistic language Exercise: Decoding Technical terms	Dictionaries, Internet, TACMIL Representative
11:00 – 11:15	Tea Break	
11:15 – 12:45	News Story – Editorial Meeting I Discuss Story Idea (30 minutes) Reporting (30 minutes) Writing (60 minutes)	Discussion related to PDHS Cell Phone Cards Notebooks, pens
12:45 – 13:45	Lunch Break and Prayers	
13:45 – 15:15	Share and discuss stories (Critique and sharing session)	Round Table Discussion Charts, Markers,
15:15 – 15:30	Tea Break	
15:30 – 17:00	Editing and Rewriting the News Story Getting the news story ready for print	Fax/Email Facilities
Notes	<i>Output 1 of 3 – Send print-ready news story to newspaper Assignment 2: Research Interview subject (from PDHS) and talent(research)</i>	

Day 3 (Wednesday, 1st April, 2009)		
Time/Duration	Activity Description	Resources
09:30 – 11:00	Choosing interview subjects , angles, message and flow Interview skills – tips and tricks	Follow Guidelines From PDHS and Research PowerPoint Presentation
11:00 – 11:15	Tea Break	
11:15 – 12:45	Interview - Editorial Meeting 2 Selecting an Interviewee Primary and secondary research Using phones for research	Prepare following Guidelines Class Discussion Charts, Markers, etc.
12:45 – 13:45	Lunch Break and Prayers	
13:45 – 15:15	Interview talent on the phone Feedback and Review	Cell Phone Card Class Discussion
15:15 – 15:30	Tea Break	
15:30 – 17:00	Complete Interview Piece	Writing
Notes	<i>Output 2 of 3: Send print-ready Interview to newspaper</i> <i>Assignment 3: Identify Feature story from PDHS</i>	

Day 4 (Thursday, 2nd April, 2009)		
Time/Duration	Activity Description	Resources
09:30 – 11:00	Structure and Elements of Feature story Giving feature story Human Face	PowerPoint Presentation Class Discussion
11:00 – 11:15	Tea Break	
11:15 – 12:45	Features – Editorial 3 Researching feature story Coming up with a feature plan / outline	From PDHS and following Internews guidelines
12:45 – 13:45	Lunch Break and Prayers	
13:45 – 15:15	Feedback on feature plan and outline	Class Discussion
15:15 – 15:30	Tea Break	
15:30 – 17:00	Refining Feature plan and Submit outline	Follow guidelines
Notes	<i>Output 3 of 3: Outline of a feature story on MCH issue.</i>	

Day 5 (Friday, 3rd April, 2009)		
Time/Duration	Activity Description	Contact/Resources
09:30 – 11:00	Reflection on the Training Mentoring Plan Evaluation of Training	Discussion Follow-up Plan/Eersa Evaluation Forms
11:00 – 11:15	Tea Break	
11:15 – 12:45	Participant's Evaluation Closing Address and Certificate Distribution Group Photo	Class Feedback TACMIL representative Internews and TACMIL
12:45 – 13:45	Lunch Break and Goodbyes	

MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS

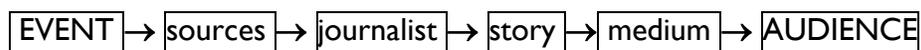
The main role journalists (whether they report on politics, economy or health) is to communicate information to their audience – readers, listeners or viewers.

How do journalists do this?

Using media!

Newspapers, Radio, Television, Internet, Mobile Phones are news mediums. They are the vehicles that carry the information. Together these are known as “the media.”

The journalist, as a representative of the media, brings an event (which is the news) to the audience.



Event: When something happens

Sources: When people talk about the event

Journalist: The person who interviews the sources and prepares the story

Story: Coverage of the story in a specific format (news, feature, etc)

Medium: The method to deliver the news to people

Audience: Readers, listeners or viewers who get the news

When events happen, sources talk about the event to journalists. The journalists then report and produce news which are published or broadcast through a medium, reaching the audience.

Example:

Premature twins born to a teenage mother after long labour → teenager’s family, doctors, health workers, health experts → health journalist → *Roznama Mashriq* → readers in Federally Administered Tribal Areas, North West Frontier Province, etc.

(A teenage mother has delivered twins at Lady Reading Hospital in Peshawar. Her family and doctors and nurses involved in her care have information and opinions about the delivery. The health journalist interviews the family, medical professionals, and public and women’s health experts, analyzes the information and writes the story, which gets edited and printed in the *Roznama Mashriq*. Readers in Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the North West Frontier Province, read the news and get informed.)

QUALITIES OF NEWS

Each newspaper or broadcast outlet has a different audience, whose lives and interests can be very different. News to someone in Sargodha in Punjab may be of little interest to someone living in Lakki Marwat in NWFP. What is important to a mother in Hyderabad in Sindh may be of little interest to a student in Gwadar in Balochistan. This is why, on the same day, different news program or newspapers may cover the same story differently. The South Asia site and the BBC Urdu site (www.bbc.co.uk/urdu, a foreign online publication with an interest and audience in Pakistan and abroad) can have very different takes of the same story. This is because these two sites have very different audiences, and not because the news is different or has different value.

Every media outlet has a different audience, but NEWS (whatever the medium and whoever the audience) **always** has the following qualities:

- **Timeliness**
 - News is what is happening now.
 - News is only news while it is NEW.
- **Impact**
 - It has impact on people or the world
 - It changes people's lives
- **Proximity/Local Angle**
 - Is about people in your area. A natural disaster in Pakistan is going to make news before a natural disaster in the USA for a local radio station
- **Relevance**
 - Power, People, Money
 - The greater the effect of a story on listeners' lives, income and emotions, the more important it will be.
- **Drama**
 - Dramatic events make news.
 - Excitement, danger and adventure
- **Entertainment**
 - Interesting
 - Fun
- **Unusual Event**
 - Strange
 - Rare
- **Conflict/Conflict Resolution**
 - Problems
 - Arguments
 - War
- **Usefulness**
 - News people can use

THE 5 WS AND 1 H OF HEALTH JOURNALISM

The **Five Ws and one H** is a concept in news style that is regarded as basics in information-gathering. It is a “formula” for getting the “full” story. This principle prescribes that in order for a news story to be considered complete, it must answer a checklist of six questions, each of which comprises an interrogative word and each question should elicit a factual answer and cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”.

1. WHO
2. WHAT
3. WHERE
4. WHEN
5. WHY
6. HOW

From these 6 actions, many questions arise.

WHO

- Who are the main **people** involved?
- Remember if it is an individual – who are they? What is their title? Age? Role in the story? Maybe even residency (Sargodha? Karachi? Now living in the UK?).
- Who are the main organizations involved? (It may not be just one person or it could be an organization or an institution.)

WHAT

- This is the **action** which is the essential core to the story:
- *Bushra Bibi died during childbirth.*
- *Saima Jahangir won the beauty pageant.*
- *Mr. Basir Khan sold his house for a 50 million rupees.*
- *The World Bank funded a new agricultural project in Chakwal.*
- It is the core action that drives everything about the story. Then ask the questions – what does this event mean? First time a woman from Karachi won a beauty contest etc). What is the central issue? Problem? Is there a solution? What will the results of this action be?

WHERE

- **Place.** Sargodha? Kashmir? Karachi? UK?

WHEN

- News is immediate, but still must be given a **time** framework.
- *“The fire broke out at 10am”*. It can also look at actions that happened in the past (that may influence the future). *“Since signing a Trade Agreement with Beijing in October 2002, the government has exported 2 million tons of grain to China”*.
- Or indeed actions that will happen in the future. *“2008 SAF Games will be the first time a women’s wrestling team will compete from Pakistan.”*

- Again there are consequences of the “when” – it is just the start of the questions! When did the problem start – is there a solution – when will it be solved – when did the authorities first learn of it – will there be more instances of this happening.....

WHY

- You can NOT pontificate without knowing things for a **fact!**
- This might be the hardest to do – but it is the most important. It often involves lots of research and interviews. Why did the government sign the trade deal?
- *Why did the Jhelum River flood?*
- We are talking here about: Causes, Motivations, Reasons, Forces at work.

HOW

- How did this event **happen?**
- *How did the fire start?*
- How can something be solved, resumed, stopped, started, developed, moved ahead, negotiated, compromised?

How much and how many

- This is about **values** and **numbers**: How many carpets were destroyed in the fire? How many hectares of farmland were flooded by the river?
- Numbers describe. They show the impact, the cost, the consequences. They pin the importance of the story down, they give it meaning. *The 21,000 refugees were re-housed in a camp close to the Pakistan border. The new camp cost donor countries 24 million dollars to set up, and needs a budget of 6 million dollars per year to keep it viable.*

WHO-WHAT-WHERE-WHEN-WHY-HOW are interlinked and lead to further questions. Journalists need to keep them in mind at all times!

Here’s one set of facts:

- WHO 15 year old Bushra Bibi
- WHAT died during childbirth
- WHERE in Sargodha
- WHEN on Wednesday
- HOW because of birth related complications
- WHY Quote

Fifteen year old Bushra Bibi from Chak-82 North in Sargodha died during childbirth at the Civil Hospital there on Wednesday due to birth related complications. Hospital gynecologist Dr. Rabia Asghar said Bushra had a long and difficult labor and the baby was born premature. “Obstructed labor is common in teenage pregnancies; they often result in disabilities for the mother and death of newborn or the mother or both.”

SO WHAT

Journalists have to tell readers the news, but they also have to tell them why the story is important. The reader wants to know, “Why should I care? Why is this important?” For example: “Enormous health risks are associated with teenage pregnancies.”

EXERCISE 1: Identify the 5 Ws and 1 H in this story

Pregnancy and Childbirth leading cause of death of teen girls in developing world

More than one million infants - and an estimated 70,000 adolescent mothers - die each year in the developing world because young girls are having children before they are physically ready, according to a Save the Children¹ report released today.

The *State of the World's Mothers* report identifies the 50 countries where early motherhood is most common and its impact most devastating on both young mothers and their babies. Save the Children has issued the report during the build up to Mother's Day as a stark reminder for developed nations of the tragic consequences of millions of children having children.

Nine of the ten highest-risk countries are in sub-Saharan Africa. Niger, Liberia and Mali top the list. Other countries with high-risk scores outside of Africa include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Guatemala, Haiti, Nepal, Nicaragua and Yemen.

The report found that in the ten highest risk countries, more than 1 in 6 teenage girls aged 15 to 19 give birth each year and nearly 1 in 7 babies born to these teenagers die before age 1. One mother recalls getting married at 7, having sex at 9 and becoming a widow at 12. In light of these findings, Save the Children is calling on the New Zealand Government to support increased funding for global basic education, child survival, maternal health and family planning programs in developing countries and to expand support for sex education in New Zealand.

Save the Children New Zealand's Executive Director John Bowis said education is the key to giving girls more options that can help delay early marriage and motherhood.

"There are an estimated 115 million school-aged children worldwide who are not in school, and 60 percent of them are girls," he said. "Girls who are educated tend to marry later, have fewer children, and raise healthier children. They also tend to use contraception to delay first births or to plan births at healthy intervals."

"New Zealand is not immune to the problem. We have the third highest rate of teenage births in 28 OECD (developed) countries – 27 in every 1,000 births, almost twice that of Australia, 3 times that of France or Belgium, and 9 times the adolescent birth rate of the Republic of Korea."² Among the report's other major findings:

- Each year 1 in every 10 births worldwide is to a mother who is still a child herself.
- Girls in their teens in poor countries are twice as likely to die from pregnancy and childbirth related causes compared with older women. Girls 14 and under face greater risks
- Children born to children are more likely to be delivered prematurely and at low birth weight and are more likely to die in the first month of life.
- Young mothers face enormous health risks - obstructed labour is common and results in newborn deaths and death or disabilities for the mother.

The full report, which includes a *Mother's Index* ranking the well-being of mothers and children in 119 countries, has been posted at www.savethechildren.org. This is the fifth consecutive year Save the Children has researched and documented conditions for mothers and their children.

¹ The *State of the World's Mothers* report is produced by Save the Children US.

² Source: UNFPA, *The State of World Population 2003*. Refer page 18 of *State of the World's Mothers 2004* report.

EXERCISE 2: Identify the 5 Ws and I H in this story**مردوں میں نس بندی کا چلن بڑھا**

ہندوستان کے وزارت صحت کی ایک رپورٹ کے مطابق مردوں کی نس بندی میں زبردست اضافہ ہو رہا ہے۔

دو برس قبل ملک میں صرف 67 ہزار مردوں نے نس بندی کرائی تھی لیکن دو ہزار سات اور دو ہزار آٹھ کے اعدادوشمار کے مطابق اس میں 108 فیصد کا اضافہ ہوا اور اب یہ تعداد ایک لاکھ 48 ہزار تک پہنچ گئی ہے۔

ملک کی سابق وزیر اعظم اندرا گاندھی کے دور اقتدار میں ایمرجنسی کے دوران جبری نس بندی کے ضابطے نے آبادی پر کنٹرول کے اس اہم طریقہ کار کو انتہائی غیر مقبول بنا دیا تھا۔

حکومت آبادی پر قابو پانے کے لیے دیہی اور شہری علاقوں میں غریب خاندانوں کے لیے نس بندی کرانے پر ایک ترغیبی رقم بھی شادی شدہ جوڑوں کو دیتی ہے لیکن عموماً پیدائش روکنے کے لیے خواتین کو ہی نس بندی کرانی پڑتی تھی اور مرد اس سے بچتے تھے۔

لیکن دلی کے روی جیسے بہت سے لوگ نس بندی کے لیے آگے آ رہے ہیں۔ وہ کہتے ہیں، پہلے سنا کرتے تھے کہ نس بندی کرانے سے پریشانیاں ہوتی ہیں، لیکن آج کل تو بہت آسان ہو گیا ہے، میری نس بندی میں صرف آدھا گھنٹہ لگا تھا۔

روی کے مطابق نسبندی کرانے سے ان پر کوئی بھی اثر نہیں پڑا ہے۔

پاپولیشن اسٹیٹیزیشن فنڈ کی ایگزیکٹیو ڈائریکٹر شیلجہ چندر کا کہنا ہے کہ مردوں کی نسبندی کے بارے میں جو ہچکچاہٹ تھی وہ اب کم ہو رہی ہے۔ ' لوگوں کو دو قسم کی ہچکچاہٹ تھی ایک تو یہ کہ ان کی مردانگی میں کمی آ جائے گی اور دوسرا کہ جب کوئی اور نہیں کر رہا ہے تو ہم کیوں کریں۔ لیکن اب ایسے حالات نہیں رہے۔'

ان کا مزید کہنا تھا کہ یہ معاشرے کے لیے ایک اچھی خبر ہے کیونکہ اس قدم سے خواتین پر سے بوجھ کم ہو گیا ہے۔

ہندوستان میں آبادی پر قابو پانے کے لیے حکومت دو بچوں کے رضاکارانہ ضابطے پر زور دیتی ہے۔

شہری آبادی اور تعلیم یافتہ طبقہ عموماً دو بچوں کے اصول پر عمل کرتا رہا ہے لیکن اقتصادی اور تعلیمی طور پر پسماندہ طبقوں میں اب بھی دو سے زیادہ بچوں کا چلن عام ہے۔

خاندانی منصوبہ بندی، سماجی، روایات اور مذہبی نکتہ نظر سے ایک حساس معاملہ رہا ہے لیکن یہ زندگی کی پیچیدگیوں اور نئی اقتصادی حقیقتوں کے پیش نظر اب ہر طبقے میں مقبول ہو رہی ہے۔

JOURNALISTS' ETHICS

The journalist's job brings with it a great deal of power and the ability to influence thought and behavior. The stories they do, can influence how the community reacts or feels about issues. Journalists should only be entrusted with this power if they accept the responsibility that goes with it. A Code of Ethics helps journalists focus on these responsibilities. It adopts tried and tested rules, which have been developed to ensure the greatest degree of accuracy, balance and fairness.

EXERCISE 3: Look at the Code of Ethics from Society of Professional Journalists in the next page, divide into groups of 3 and develop code of ethics you will use when reporting on MNCH issues.



Code of Ethics

Preamble

Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility.

Members of the Society share a dedication to ethical behavior and adopt this code to declare the Society's principles and standards of practice.

Seek Truth and Report It

Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Journalists should:

- ▶ Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
- ▶ Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
- ▶ Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.
- ▶ Always question sources' motives before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.
- ▶ Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
- ▶ Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.
- ▶ Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.
- ▶ Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story.
- ▶ Never plagiarize.
- ▶ Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.
- ▶ Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.
- ▶ Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.
- ▶ Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
- ▶ Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.
- ▶ Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
- ▶ Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.
- ▶ Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

Minimize Harm

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect.

Journalists should:

- ▶ Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- ▶ Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- ▶ Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
- ▶ Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
- ▶ Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
- ▶ Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.
- ▶ Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
- ▶ Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

Act Independently

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know.

Journalists should:

- ▶ Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
- ▶ Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- ▶ Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.
- ▶ Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- ▶ Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.
- ▶ Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
- ▶ Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

Be Accountable

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other.

Journalists should:

- ▶ Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
- ▶ Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
- ▶ Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- ▶ Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.
- ▶ Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

USING SIMPLE LANGUAGE

Journalists have to learn to write in simple, easy to understand language. As a communicator, he/she needs to use CONVERSATIONAL LANGUAGE and not language used by experts. This is because most people who read newspapers are ordinary people and do not understand if complicated words or technical jargon are issued. **As a rule, it is recommended that journalists NEVER use foreign phrases, scientific words and unusual phrases without understanding it themselves and explaining it.** E.g. Use spade, NOT manual mud excavating device; and death, NOT mortality. Government documents also have a tendency to be written in official style....journalists need to SIMPLIFY, TRANSLATE and EXPLAIN.

EXERCISE 4: Simplify the following list – Mother and Newborn Child Health Issues

No	Terminologies	English	Urdu
01	Maternal		
02	Neonatal Mortality		
03	Morbidity		
04	Mortality		
05	Fetus		
06	Resuscitation		
07	Prenatal		
08	Sepsis		
09	Hemorrhage		
10	MMR		
11	Antenatal		
12	Postnatal		
13	Asphyxia		
14	Percentage		
15	Fistula		
16	Hypoxia		
17	Anemic		
18	Postpartum Care		
19	IUD		
20	Maternal Mortality Rate		
21	Infertility		
22	Episiotomy incision		
23	Forceps		
24	Amniotic Fluids		
25	Breech		
26	Ovulation		
27	Trimesters		
28	Menstruation		
29	Eclampsia		
30	Cesarean Section		

INTERVIEWING

Good interviewing is an art. It is based on a number of things, including good research. Thorough research will inform you about subjects and help you select the best and most appropriate person to interview. The purpose of an interview is to elicit information. That may mean seeking facts, opinions, explanations or impressions on the subject matter in question, all in the interviewees own words. The interviewer's opinions are not relevant so should not be expressed. The interviewer must appear to be impartial and objective. Sometimes it is necessary for the interviewer to play devil's advocate to introduce opinions, even to take a position contrary to that of the person being interviewed, to elicit the best response. But such an approach should still leave no doubt that the stance being taken is not the personal one of the interviewer.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

There are many types of interviews, which fall broadly into three categories:

1. The *informational* interview
2. The *interpretive* interview
3. The *emotional* interview

The Informational Interview

This type of interview is used to gather facts and opinions. It asks who, what, where, when, why and how. These types of questions elicit more than a "yes" or "no" answer. They are known as open questions.

The Interpretive Interview

The interpretive interview is quite different. In this type of interview the facts are already clear. What the interviewee needs to do is to explain or interpret them. For example, a financial analyst may be asked to explain what an increase in US trade tariffs will mean for Pakistan's cotton farmers; and a public health expert needs to be interviewed to gather information about women's reproductive health issues.

The Emotional Interview

The emotional interview attempts to elicit the interviewee's feelings about something that has touched them personally. These are difficult interviews and require a great deal of sensitivity. If you're doing this kind of interview, try and spend some time winning the trust of the interviewee before you put a microphone in front of them. If, for example, you interview someone living with HIV/Aids, go and have a cup of tea with them first so that they are relaxed and comfortable with you. If the interviewee trusts you, he or she is much more likely to divulge their real thoughts and feelings.

The News Conference

The news conference is another type of interview that most journalists encounter sooner or later. This is where journalists from different media gather – often to compete – for a common interview. Politicians, business people and lobby groups often hold media conferences. They have a particular story to tell and want to 'sell' it to the media. Usually the organizers have a handout containing information they want reporters to pass on. The person who called the conference arrives, usually makes an initial statement, which everyone records or notes down and often opens the conference to questions knowing

that the handout information has already been effectively passed. It is a type of media manipulation that can get out of hand unless reporters are alert. How should one be alert?

Check with other sources to verify the information that has been given.

See if there are any other “sides” of the story that need to be included. If, for example, the person at the press conference is making an allegation against someone, be sure you give that person the right to respond.

RESEARCH AND PRE-INTERVIEWING

Being well informed and up-to-date with the news is the job of every journalist. This is part of the research process. Every journalist should have at least one paper delivered to his/her home daily. It should be read before work. Journalists should NEVER turn up to work not knowing what the major stories of the day are. Sometimes, however, it will be impossible to know much about the subject you are assigned to cover. The important thing is that you know how and where to find relevant information and background material. For example, if you are assigned a story about workplaces that are friendly to breastfeeding mothers, what can be done to prepare for it?

Have any stories been written about the service, the need for it or how it operates? Has the organization sponsoring it sent the newsroom or program department any background information or handouts? Refer to these. Then try any contacts that might be able to provide more background on the service or the need for it. For instance, are there any government reports on the subject? Find out. Then try phoning a women’s organization or a labor issues expert who may have some knowledge in this area. He or she could also recommend other specialists you could talk to. These conversations are referred to as pre-interviews - interviews that take place before the formal interview and give you background information.

All of this takes time – and usually you don’t have much time. Journalists are very busy and are often working “against the clock”. Despite this, the more time spent preparing for an interview the better it will be. To go into an interview knowing nothing is an insult to the interviewee and reflects on the professional credibility of the reporter and of the news operation. The best way to see that this never happens is to read newspapers regularly, and to monitor radio and television news and current affairs programs.

SELECTING THE “BEST TALENT”

As part of the research process, journalists should talk to as many people as possible. If you’re doing a story about health, for example, you may talk to half a dozen experts before you decide which one you’re going to interview. But how do you then select the right person to interview? This person is known as the “best talent”. Your talent should have:

Ability to communicate in a way that the ordinary person understands

Ability to communicate in an interesting way (with anecdotes and examples)

Too often journalists interview the first person they think of. This person may be an expert in their field, but very often they can’t communicate with the ordinary citizen.

INTERVIEWING TIPS

There are a series of basic questions that, if followed, will generally provide you with most of the information you need for a news interview. The key words are who, what, when, where, why and how. They guarantee an answer of more than 'yes' or 'no'.

Who was hurt in the car crash and what is their condition now?

What caused the accident?

When did it happen?

Where did the accident occur?

Why did it take so long to free the trapped passengers?

How did you get them out? *How* did you get the pregnant woman to the hospital?

Ask open questions. Avoid any question that encourages a yes/no answer. If you say "So your sister delivered yesterday?" you are likely to get a yes or no answer. Instead you could ask: "Can you describe what her labor was like? How was she feeling?"

Do as much research as possible. There is nothing worse than challenging someone if you have the facts wrong because you will end up looking like a fool.

Write down questions but don't stick to them. Follow up on points raised by interviewee.

Make sure your questions are focused. Don't try to make them too general in the hope that something interesting will result. Ask just one question at a time.

Never give out questions before the interview. However, you can discuss the subject.

Give your interviewee a fair chance to prepare, especially if you want detailed facts and figures. If you rehearse your questions with the interviewee, the answers will sound artificial and will lack spontaneity.

Catch your interviewee's eye-line. It helps to encourage confidence.

Don't rush to fill pauses. Give your interviewee time to think or react, especially if he or she is distressed. Giving people the space to talk elicits the most extraordinary results.

Don't be afraid to ask questions if you have not understood something the interviewee said. If you do not understand, neither will your reader.

Don't argue – try to remain calm. Keep your opinions to yourself.

If you are doing an interview where you have to ask very difficult questions, generally ask those questions toward the end of the interview.

Listen – to do it well is harder than you imagine.

FEATURES

Feature stories are articles containing emotion and analysis as well as news and information. Feature stories are essential part of newspapers and magazines and give background to a current news issue. The subject matter may be quite boring, but features have a human face, anecdotes and emotions. Features are not opinion pieces, even though they may have a strong point-of-view. While distinction is made between published features and news, conceptually there are few hard boundaries between the two. It is quite possible to write a feature in the style of a news story, for instance. However, features tend to take a narrative approach, using opening paragraphs to set the scene (instead of the 5 Ws and 1 H, as in a news story.)

Features can:

1. Be read in a single sitting on the day the story is published
2. Are NOT news stories but are inspired by news that is still current
3. Have, at their heart, human beings, their emotions and other things of interest to ordinary people
4. Are about lives lived in our time
5. Use anecdotes, scene setting and narrative strategies
6. Can be written and reported within journalistic timeframes

Principles of journalism – honesty, fairness and accuracy – are as important in a news feature as in any other journalistic piece.

These are general steps journalists follow when writing features.

1. Pick a topic for the feature story
2. Research the topic and learn as much background information as possible
3. Come up with a story angle – a spin on something ordinary, unusual aspect of a story, a fresh angle to the news, or an anecdote about the effect of the news on someone's life.
4. Research all secondary and published sources of information – newspaper articles, public records, people related to stories, etc.
5. Make a list of points the article will cover and sources of information for them and a list of questions based on the topic. The list should be used as a guide and the journalist should be ready to modify the questions when interviewing the talent/expert
6. Research the best people for the interviews. Executive directors of organizations or public information officers (like the health officials trained by Internews in Media Relation Workshop) are often the most accurate and accessible sources. They also should be able to help journalists get in touch with sources and help with anecdotes.
7. Interviews may be done in person or over the phone, and in some cases over e-mail. However, it is recommended that the scene setting interviews be done in person. While interviewing, journalists can be friendly, but need to be respectful at all times.
8. Read through research and interview notes, pick important quotes and highlight important information that will go into the story.
9. Outline the features story using the information learned from interviews. Features need a scene setting anecdote (introduction), a context paragraph (background and context of the story), differing points of view, expert analysis and a conclusion.

10. Write your story using the outline as a guide. Start with the “lede”. Don’t feel like you have to use all your notes and you can paraphrase if you need to.

Guidelines to use when pitching News, Interviews and Feature ideas

Please come with a treatment of your story idea to the Editorial Meetings. And follow this guideline for all your assignments – News, Interviews, Features – that you will pitch and do.

- Please list the 5 Ws and I H of your story
Who:
What:
When:
Where:
Why:
How:

- In your treatment clearly outline
 - the central concept / the story idea
 - the main character(s)
 - and the storyline

- Tell us how you will develop the storyline
 - describe the characters
 - interviews
 - and scenes

- Why is this story important to tell now?
 - news peg
 - your angle
 - how is it different from what has already been published before

- What impression do you want to leave with the readers, what will they have learned or experienced as a result of reading this story?

- Why should your readers care about this story?

Note: The easiest way to organize a feature story is to think of it in terms of scenes, like in a movie.

MORE READING MATERIALS

PRINCIPLES OF JOURNALISM

In 1997, an organization then administered by PEJ, the Committee of Concerned Journalists, began a national conversation among citizens and news people to identify and clarify the principles that underlie journalism. After four years of research, including 20 public forums around the country, a reading of journalism history, a national survey of journalists, and more, the group released a Statement of Shared Purpose that identified nine principles. These became the basis for The Elements of Journalism, the book by PEJ Director Tom Rosenstiel and CCJ Chairman and PEJ Senior Counselor Bill Kovach. Here are those principles, as outlined in the original Statement of Shared Purpose.

A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

After extended examination by journalists themselves of the character of journalism at the end of the twentieth century, we offer this common understanding of what defines our work. The central purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with accurate and reliable information they need to function in a free society.

This encompasses myriad roles--helping define community, creating common language and common knowledge, identifying a community's goals, heroes and villains, and pushing people beyond complacency. This purpose also involves other requirements, such as being entertaining, serving as watchdog and offering voice to the voiceless.

Over time journalists have developed nine core principles to meet the task. They comprise what might be described as the theory of journalism:

1. JOURNALISM'S FIRST OBLIGATION IS TO THE TRUTH

Democracy depends on citizens having reliable, accurate facts put in a meaningful context. Journalism does not pursue truth in an absolute or philosophical sense, but it can--and must--pursue it in a practical sense. This "journalistic truth" is a process that begins with the professional discipline of assembling and verifying facts. Then journalists try to convey a fair and reliable account of their meaning, valid for now, subject to further investigation. Journalists should be as transparent as possible about sources and methods so audiences can make their own assessment of the information. Even in a world of expanding voices, accuracy is the foundation upon which everything else is built--context, interpretation, comment, criticism, analysis and debate. The truth, over time, emerges from this forum. As citizens encounter an ever greater flow of data, they have more need--not less--for identifiable sources dedicated to verifying that information and putting it in context.

2. ITS FIRST LOYALTY IS TO CITIZENS

While news organizations answer to many constituencies, including advertisers and shareholders, the journalists in those organizations must maintain allegiance to citizens and the larger public interest above any other if they are to provide the news without fear or favor. This commitment to citizens first is the basis of a news organization's credibility, the implied covenant that tells the audience the coverage is not slanted for friends or advertisers. Commitment to citizens also means journalism should present a representative

picture of all constituent groups in society. Ignoring certain citizens has the effect of disenfranchising them. The theory underlying the modern news industry has been the belief that credibility builds a broad and loyal audience, and that economic success follows in turn. In that regard, the business people in a news organization also must nurture--not exploit--their allegiance to the audience ahead of other considerations.

3. ITS ESSENCE IS A DISCIPLINE OF VERIFICATION

Journalists rely on a professional discipline for verifying information. When the concept of objectivity originally evolved, it did not imply that journalists are free of bias. It called, rather, for a consistent method of testing information--a transparent approach to evidence--precisely so that personal and cultural biases would not undermine the accuracy of their work. The method is objective, not the journalist. Seeking out multiple witnesses, disclosing as much as possible about sources, or asking various sides for comment, all signal such standards. This discipline of verification is what separates journalism from other modes of communication, such as propaganda, fiction or entertainment. But the need for professional method is not always fully recognized or refined. While journalism has developed various techniques for determining facts, for instance, it has done less to develop a system for testing the reliability of journalistic interpretation.

4. ITS PRACTITIONERS MUST MAINTAIN AN INDEPENDENCE FROM THOSE THEY COVER

Independence is an underlying requirement of journalism, a cornerstone of its reliability. Independence of spirit and mind, rather than neutrality, is the principle journalists must keep in focus. While editorialists and commentators are not neutral, the source of their credibility is still their accuracy, intellectual fairness and ability to inform--not their devotion to a certain group or outcome. In our independence, however, we must avoid any tendency to stray into arrogance, elitism, isolation or nihilism.

5. IT MUST SERVE AS AN INDEPENDENT MONITOR OF POWER

Journalism has an unusual capacity to serve as watchdog over those whose power and position most affect citizens. The Founders recognized this to be a rampart against despotism when they ensured an independent press; courts have affirmed it; citizens rely on it. As journalists, we have an obligation to protect this watchdog freedom by not demeaning it in frivolous use or exploiting it for commercial gain.

6. IT MUST PROVIDE A FORUM FOR PUBLIC CRITICISM AND COMPROMISE

The news media are the common carriers of public discussion, and this responsibility forms a basis for our special privileges. This discussion serves society best when it is informed by facts rather than prejudice and supposition. It also should strive to fairly represent the varied viewpoints and interests in society, and to place them in context rather than highlight only the conflicting fringes of debate. Accuracy and truthfulness require that as framers of the public discussion we not neglect the points of common ground where problem solving occurs.

7. IT MUST STRIVE TO MAKE THE SIGNIFICANT INTERESTING AND RELEVANT

Journalism is storytelling with a purpose. It should do more than gather an audience or catalogue the important. For its own survival, it must balance what readers know they want with what they cannot anticipate but need. In short, it must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant. The effectiveness of a piece of journalism is measured both by how much a work engages its audience and enlightens it. This means journalists must continually ask what information has most value to citizens and in what form. While journalism should reach beyond such topics as government and public safety, a journalism overwhelmed by trivia and false significance ultimately engenders a trivial society.

8. IT MUST KEEP THE NEWS COMPREHENSIVE AND PROPORTIONAL

Keeping news in proportion and not leaving important things out are also cornerstones of truthfulness. Journalism is a form of cartography: it creates a map for citizens to navigate society. Inflating events for sensation, neglecting others, stereotyping or being disproportionately negative all make a less reliable map. The map also should include news of all our communities, not just those with attractive demographics. This is best achieved by newsrooms with a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives. The map is only an analogy; proportion and comprehensiveness are subjective, yet their elusiveness does not lessen their significance.

9. ITS PRACTITIONERS MUST BE ALLOWED TO EXERCISE THEIR PERSONAL CONSCIENCE

Every journalist must have a personal sense of ethics and responsibility--a moral compass. Each of us must be willing, if fairness and accuracy require, to voice differences with our colleagues, whether in the newsroom or the executive suite. News organizations do well to nurture this independence by encouraging individuals to speak their minds. This stimulates the intellectual diversity necessary to understand and accurately cover an increasingly diverse society. It is this diversity of minds and voices, not just numbers, that matters.

LOOSENING LIPS: THE ART INTERVIEWING

THE SETUP

RESEARCH:

Whether you have five minutes or five days, research the person and the topic. Run the name on the Internet or check the clips. Talk to the person's cohorts. Read court records. A well-researched question is a better question. A well-researched interviewer is empowered.

PLAN:

Make a tactical plan. Discuss it with colleagues. Whom should you interview first? Where will you interview the person? How much time will you have? Will you tape or not? The best place is usually where the person is doing the thing you are writing about. However, whistle-blowers and reluctant targets are best contacted at home. You might calm a nervous source by taking him or her for a walk. A lunch appointment requires a person to spend at least an hour with you. A phone interview is the least desirable, but also the most common.

ORGANIZE:

Write single-word clues on the flap of your notebook to remind you of issues you want to cover. Organize paperwork so you won't fumble as you talk. Prepare a comprehensive all-purpose question for cases where the door might slam in your face. Prepare the photographer and the fellow interviewer so you will work together.

INNER INTERVIEWING:

Imagine a successful interview. Warm up like an athlete. Be skeptical but never cynical. Believe and you will receive.

RELUCTANT PEOPLE

THE OPENER:

Having worked yourself into a friendly, courteous and aggressive frenzy, approach your subject as though you belong there. Straightforward introductions are best. Be open and unafraid. Never lie.

KEEP IT GOING:

When the door is closing on your face, find common ground. "By the way, I notice you've got a poodle. I've got a poodle. Weird dogs. Just the other day . . ." The process is to get a person talking about anything and eventually they'll talk about what you came for.

TAP THEIR CURIOSITY:

As a person hangs up the phone, quickly offer to explain what you are working on, what you know about or what you have been told. Prepare for this ahead of time.

GET THEM TO SPEAK ABOUT OTHERS:

Bring a list of other people to the interview. A payroll. A phone book. Your own list. Go down the list with the interview subject. People are more comfortable talking about others.

In doing so, they will reveal more about themselves and their organization, and point you in other directions.

NO BIG DEAL:

Respond to the "I can't comment" by explaining that you need their help, that talking with you is no big deal, that you are talking with others and that you are here to learn (only, of course, if all of this is true). Say all this with a soft but relentless momentum. Massage objections into possibilities. Propose alternatives. Don't argue. Steer. Keep the conversation rolling. Respond to the "I'm afraid to comment" with a little sympathy and a lot of reassurance (if those reassurances are honest). Listen to people's concerns and understand them. Propose easier "assignments" like "just describe your job" or "tell me about your town." You'll get to the harder stuff later.

PUBLIC OFFICIAL OR OTHER BIG SHOT:

Gently, without being insulting, respond to a "no comment" from an "important" person or bureaucrat by explaining how bad that sort of thing looks in print. "Let's find a way to talk about this. Tell me about this one aspect, for instance . " As a last ditch, explain that you will be doing a story whether they cooperate or not (if that's true). Explain that you want to get it right. Offer to call back shortly before the story runs to describe what will be in the story. (In the process, get all the contact numbers).

DETOURS:

If a person won't talk, go to others in his or her office or to associates. You will get more information, and by doing this you will loosen them up.

ANONYMITY:

Don't accept information "on background" blithely. Even if it means going back several times, convince people to go on the record. (Absolutely "off-the-record" information is useless, since you can't use it under any circumstance. Avoid it. It's a waste of time.)

RATCHETING:

If a subject insists on talking "on background," make a formal agreement and explain that you will try later to get them to talk on the record. Take notes. At the end of the interview, or at a follow-up interview, pick out quotes that aren't too damning and say: "Now what about this thing you said here. Why can't you say that on the record?" If they agree to put that comment on the record, go to another one in your notes and say: "Well, if you can say that on the record, why can't you say this? And so on. I have gotten an entire notebook on the record this way. If they insist on anonymity, however, you must honor it.

FOR THE SAKE OF CLARITY:

There are cases where someone tells you part of a story and then balks. Or you already know part of a story and can't get the rest. Try saying, "look, you've already told me this much (or, I already know this much). You had better tell me the rest. I mean, you don't want me to get it wrong. I sure don't want to get it wrong."

NO QUESTIONS, PLEASE:

Sometimes making a statement is better than asking a question. Read from a document or repeat something someone said. A question might produce nothing more than a "yes, no or

I don't know", A statement will provoke a comment. On one occasion I inadvertently repeated something that was inaccurate to a cop. In correcting me, he dragged out a report I wanted to see.

USE WHAT YOU THINK YOU KNOW:

Ask the official WHY he fired the whistle-blower rather than asking WHETHER he did the deed. The question presumes you already know even if you don't have it confirmed. They'll start explaining rather than denying.

LOST REPORTER:

It doesn't hurt to say you need the person's help. "Who is going to explain this to me if you don't?"

TRY AGAIN:

When the door is slammed in your face, try again a day later or a week later. Keep trying. People change their minds. If it is terribly important, try again a year later.

GETTING ALL THE GOODS

CHRONOLOGY:

Take the subject through his or her story chronologically. You will understand the tale better, and you will spot gaps in the timetable. You'll organize the interview subject, the way you would straighten a messy file cabinet.

LIFE STORY:

Get the life story, even in cases where you don't intend to use it. Even when I interview a lawyer about a case, or a bureaucrat about a government policy, I get the life story if I have time. I get useful information and ask better questions as a result.

LOGIC:

Listen for logic. Respond to your instincts. If you don't understand something, gently insist on an explanation. If a person uses A-C-D logic, ask that they fill in the "B" part. The most important information may be hidden in B. Don't be afraid to ask. There are no embarrassing questions; there are only embarrassing answers.

HOW AND WHY:

When a person says something important, ask the key question: "How do you know that?" It sheds light on credibility, extracts more detail and is a door opener to other sources. Follow up with: "How else do you know." Also, ask people why they do what they do, rather than just asking what they do.

HYPNOSIS:

When people reach an important part of a story, slow them down and turn them into storytellers. Ask where they were standing, what they were doing, what they were wearing, what was the temperature and what were the noises around them? Then switch to the present tense, and ask questions like: What are you doing now? What is your friend saying? You and the interview subject will walk through the scene together. This technique frequently fails at first. People prefer to tell their story the easy way, in the abstract. "I

drove the car off the cliff." Tell them this won't work. "I'm trying, but I just can't picture it yet. Drive me off the cliff with you." This is how you get a story, not a bunch of facts.

PAY ATTENTION TO DETAIL:

Inventory the room thoroughly and in an organized fashion. Look at the walls, read the top of the desk and study the lapel pin. You'll get clues and details for your story. Make notes on what you see. Make use of what you see in the interview. Ask about it.

SPONTANEITY:

If you are on the scene, let things happen. Listen and watch for the unexpected.

TELEPHONE:

If you can't be on the scene, ask people on the phone to describe their surroundings. This will transport you emotionally over the phone lines and provide information (the plaque on a man's wall became a key detail in one story, after I had independently verified what it said). Get people to tell their stories in three dimensions over the phone. Let things happen. Listen and "watch" for the unexpected.

USE YOUR EARS:

We talk too much during interviews. Let the other person do the talking. Check your biases at the door; listen with an open mind. React with an open mind.

LOOK FOR OTHER SOURCES:

While at the interview, listen and watch for other sources. Meet the secretary, the assistants and the coworkers and make note of details about them. This will come in handy as you turn them into sources.

GETTING THE CONFESSION:

Ask the subject for the names of people who support him or her. Then ask for the names of people who would criticize. Then ask what those critics are likely to say. This will jar loose uncomfortable information and tips. Ask whether the person has ever been disciplined or fired on the job or in school, charged with or convicted of a crime, arrested for drunken driving, sued, testified in court, etc. Since all this stuff is on a record somewhere, people are reluctant to lie about it.

LIARS:

If you know someone is lying, allow the liar to spin his or her yarn. Don't interrupt except to ask for more detail. Deceivers frequently provide extensive detail because they think a very complete story will add to their credibility. Listen and take good notes. When the lie has been fully constructed -- down to the last nail -- go back and logically pry it apart (nail by nail). Don't be impatient. The fabricator is now in a corner. Keep them there until they break.

DON'T JOIN:

Be sympathetic in manner, but don't join sides with your sources. Protect your source from exposure, if you have promised to do so, but not from his or her dishonesty and ignorance. And don't get sucked in by the embattled congressman who seems so cooperative when he grants you an interview and says, "I don't believe in taking money from those guys." You

should say, "that may be true, but I'm asking you whether you took the money, not whether you believe in doing so."

DON'T FEED:

Be wary of feeding information to an interview subject. In some cases it will come back to you as fact. Cops will tell you: "Don't ask whether a person saw the red car, ask what they saw."

ASK AGAIN:

Sometimes it pays to interview a person two or three times on the same subject. One public official gave me four different and conflicting explanations for the trips he took at taxpayer expense.

REVIEW:

Go back over your notes and look for holes. Then conduct a second interview. Tell the interview subject what you believe you have learned. This will kick loose additional information, fill gaps and correct your mistakes. Do it again and again, if necessary. I like to get back to key players just before a story runs to assure accuracy. This last step has often improved the story.

INNOVATE:

If an outrageous question comes to mind, and seems compelling, ask it. During a phone interview I convinced a man sitting in a bar with a cell phone to pass the phone around so I could talk with his companions. A ship captain allowed me to go through his files only because I asked.

DRAIN THEM:

People aren't aware of how much they know. You must guide them through their memory. Visualize your subject as a bucket full of information and empty it.

HONESTY:

Don't pretend to be someone else and don't lie. You can certainly omit information, but the more you can reveal about the nature of your story, the more comfortable and helpful your subject will be.

BE THE DIRECTOR:

A great interview feels like a conversation but moves relentlessly toward the information you need. Keep control, but do so gently.

BE FLEXIBLE:

You may know what your story is about, but don't get stuck. A really great interview might be one that completely changes your story. Seek the truth, not what you believe to be the truth.

PERSONALITY:

Let your personality shine through (if you have a good one). Don't be a blank wall.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTION:

Near the end of an interview, ask the person what else our readers might be interested in. Sometimes people have more than one newspaper-worthy story in them.

CHECK BACK:

After the story runs, call the subject for his or her reaction. You'll get additional stories and tips this way.

Eric Nalder, Chief Investigative Reporter for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, is a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter.

FEATURES

One of the hardest things about writing a feature, rather like telling a good story, is knowing how to begin. Imagine you are just back from a trip to China and are off to meet your friends to tell them all about it. Unless you and your friends are trainspotters, the last thing you would do would be to tell them the time and type of every train you took to get from A to B. Instead, you would tell them an amusing or exciting anecdote about what happened while you were there.

Similarly, when starting to write a feature, you need to grab your reader's attention, to make them want to stop whatever they are doing and to listen to what you have to say.

But although finding that "hook" is one of the hardest aspects of feature writing, it is only one element of what makes a good feature writer. Before you even start typing, think about how you are going to achieve your goal of communicating to your audience in a way that--to cite the guiding principles of the BBC--educates, informs, and entertains.

Know your reader

Writing a feature for the *Student BMJ* is a far cry from writing an essay for your tutor. The tone is different; the style is different. A feature can be written in a less formal more conversational way.

Writing for an audience of medical students is going to be different again from writing for qualified doctors, readers of a women's magazine, or the readers of the *Sun* (a British tabloid) newspaper. Remember to use points of reference that will be meaningful to your audience. There's little point alluding to a recent trip you have made in your Saab, for example, if your audience is more likely to be using a bicycle .

Know your reader

It is always good to write an introduction that is likely to resonate with your audience's own experience. This one in the *Student BMJ* by Keri Michele Lodge, works because she alludes to the long hours a doctor works."I'm on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, all year round," says Chris Davies. "No, Chris Davies is not an overworked doctor. He is one of 5.9 million carers."

The style of feature

Features come in many guises. The *Student BMJ* has its own particular "slots," each with their own character. Check these by reading the magazine or looking at the guidelines to authors, which are available on student.bmj.com.

Make sure you know what type of feature you are writing. If you are pitching an idea to a magazine that you do not read, buy a copy first to get an idea of the style of its various features.

Finding out what works where

Think about the features that you have read and enjoyed, whether it was a piece in a national newspaper, your favorite magazine, or even the last issue of *Student BMJ*. What made you want to read it in the first place? How did the intro grab you? And what makes you carry on reading it? Is it the clever phrases used by the writer? The fact you know you can believe what they have told you? The fact they make you laugh? Finally, were you convinced by the argument? Has it made any difference to what you think about the topic?

Would you save the article, or suggest someone else read it? And how does the style differ in a professional journal to a piece in a woman's magazine?

A profile needs to give more of an idea of the individual you are interviewing--concentrate on their personality and what is interesting about them, rather than running chronologically through their CV. The profile should contain lots of quotes from the person, as well as some of your own personal observations. Tape the interview rather than just relying on your notes.

Making profiles more interesting

There is always a danger, with a profile, of just telling the reader about the person's CV. The first version below did not appear in print; the second did. Which would you want to read more of? John Reid, health secretary, was appointed to the post in June after the unexpected resignation of his predecessor Alan Milburn. It came as a huge surprise to everyone--not least, John Reid himself--when he was appointed health secretary after Alan Milburn's unexpected resignation in June. According to the *Mail on Sunday*, the reaction of the former Northern Ireland secretary was, "Oh f... , it's health."

Prepare your questions in advance, but be prepared to be flexible if the conversation takes a different turn in the interview. You may miss an important point just because you stick rigidly to your preplanned questions.

If you are writing about your personal experience you will need to be quite open. Try to keep the tone straightforward and conversational. You are trying to communicate here, not show off your ability to regurgitate long words from the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Grab your reader's attention

First person features still need to grab the reader's attention. This introduction, which later explains that the author is taking part in a drug trial, certainly does that. The reader, not knowing why she has this complaint, is immediately wondering what is wrong with her."As I coughed up blood in the shower for the fourth time that morning, I thought once again 'why am I doing this to myself?'"

News features give background to a current news issue. Even though the subject matter may on the face of it be quite dull, you have to try to make it interesting. It is important to remember that these are not opinion pieces. Even though you may have a strong personal opinion on the subject you are writing about, you should always remain impartial, fair, and accurate. Get quotes from others--preferably experts in the field--that back up the arguments you are trying to make (and be prepared to change your mind if the experts do not agree with you).

News features should be authoritative and based on facts that you have checked and can substantiate. If the information is unclear, check it. Do not be afraid to look stupid. You will look even more stupid if you just regurgitate nonsense.

Leaders, editorials, and other opinion pieces also fall within the "feature" category. You will most likely be asked to write one of these if you have a particular expertise in the area concerned. Even then, you should be able to support opinions with fact.

Sweeping generalization or justified personal opinion?

You should, in general, try to avoid sweeping generalizations that you cannot substantiate--although you can get away with it more easily if you are writing more of an opinion piece, as with this introduction from Raj Persaud."One of the enormous but unspoken realities about the practice of medicine is that most doctors are basically bored by their jobs."

Because Persaud is an expert, and a doctor, we can assume he is saying this from some kind of knowledge or authority--not that he is just voicing his own personal feelings.

The brief

Make sure you and your commissioning editor are clear about what they are expecting you to submit. Check with them what sort of tone they want. Something serious? Or is it a lighter, more humorous piece? If possible, confirm the brief, including the word count, and deadline by email.

Once you have agreed a brief, stick to it. Do not write more, or less, words than you are asked for. Always make sure you deliver your copy on time--and be prepared to answer any queries about it after that.

Doing your research

You may well be asked to write on something you have only the haziest notion about. If so, a Google search is usually a good place to start. And even if you do think you know about it, you should do a bit more research.

If you are investigating a medical story, you might want to look into search engines such as Pubmed central, which can be viewed direct through a link from specific articles on bmj.com. And you can check out many stories through the search engines on national newspaper or the BBC's websites.

Make sure to get an expert to comment. This is always going to carry more gravitas than merely repeating information from the internet or your lecture notes. It also helps break up the narrative pace of the article, so is a good stylistic device.

Getting those quotes

Getting direct quotes is essential for a good feature. To find an expert, try a search on Google. Or if that does not work go to bmj.com and put the subject you are researching in the search engine. You will soon find a list of recent articles and will be able to pull out the names of a few relevant experts--along with their email addresses.

Email is often the most effective way of approaching an academic. But if they do not respond to your email, try calling their secretary to arrange a convenient time to talk to them by telephone.

The difficulty with research is to know when to stop. You might like to read 10 other papers you have just discovered on the topic in the last half hour, but if you only have two hours left to write the piece, you sometimes just have to accept you cannot do that. As a

feature writer you have to become an instant expert and rarely have time to get involved at the level you would in academic research.

Plan your research time carefully, leave time for people to call you back, and leave time to write and polish your final result. There is nothing worse than rushing an article up to deadline, sending it in with lots of mistakes, and never getting another commission from that magazine again.

Remember, too, to make a note of where you found the information you are using in the piece. You may need to find it again if there is a query about it from your editor.

The introduction

An anecdote, or an interesting observation, or even a clever play on words will often make a good introduction. Sometimes a direct quote will do the trick. Try to avoid the plodding "once upon a time" style.

One of the other classic pitfalls is to make a sweeping generalization that does not, in fact, stand up to scrutiny. The last thing you want is for your reader to start taking issue with you in your first paragraph.

It is worth spending time on your introductory paragraph. Play around with ideas and images until you hit on one that works. But do not wait for the perfect intro before you start writing. Sometimes you just need to get it down on paper, then hone the introduction later.

Keep it coming

Your reader has a million and one reasons to do something other than spend the next 10 minutes reading your article. Why should they bother?

This is where your art as a writer comes in. Unlike news stories, where there is a standard formula to follow,¹ features can, and should, be more creative if they are to keep the reader's attention.

I would liken a well written news feature to an interesting but well signposted walk through a wood. Firstly, your reader chooses to go on it with you. You lead them through the argument, pointing out useful pieces of information about the trees and scenery along the way. You will answer questions in the reader's mind about where you are taking them next, and vary the pace every so often, so that they do not get bored or tired.

The golden rule is not to lose them in a fog of confusing information, nor to take them on a long, arduous ramble they weren't prepared for. And you should never waste their time by leading them up a blind alley.

Sometimes when you start writing, you find you can't see the wood for the trees--a common problem with complex features. Whether or not this happens, it is a good idea before you start to jot down the main message, then the other points you want to make, almost like an essay plan. Work out how you get from one point to another--and decide which bits are unnecessary and can be cut.

Happy endings

A good ending is almost as difficult as a good beginning. Unlike news stories, where the ending is cut if space is short, a good feature should end on a positive, or uplifting, note.

It may reiterate a theme in the introduction, or return to an analogy which runs throughout the feature. But it should not--unlike for an essay--be a summary of your piece.

It should, rather like taking an exciting trip abroad, leave the reader with a sense of having travelled successfully from A to B, of having been returned home safely, but better informed as a result--all without ever having moved from their chair.

Lyn Eaton, freelance journalist, London

Further reading

Hicks W, Adams S, Gilbert H. *Writing for journalists*. London: Routledge, 1999