



SYLLABUS

Class – B.A. (HONS.) MASS COMMUNICATION

III Semester

Subject – Editing

Unit-I	Concept & definition of Editing, importance of Editing.
	Elements of Editing
	Golden Rules of Editing
	Editorial Department
	Editor vs Editor-in-Chief
	Qualities of a Good Editor
	Editing in Print vs Editing in Online
	Editing in Newspaper vs Editing in Magazine



UNIT-I

INTRODUCTION

Indian newspapers at one time were mostly occupied with speeches and they shut out the real hard news from within the country and outside. They have now grown up and the space given to speeches and handouts is much reduced but they still form a considerable part of the daily newspaper compared to the western press. Speeches and handouts are important only in so far as they are newsworthy and not because a very important person is making a speech or a handout has been issued by an important government department. The sub-editor must always dig for news in a speech or handout and discard it ruthlessly if the speech is unproductive. He should take out the essence which is of reader interest.

In a news organization, editing plays a pivotal role. A news item or a news story, as it is called, is written by hurried reporters, and is rough edged like raw diamond. Hence, the copy is polished and honed by a team of editors, who form the Editorial Desk. The team, also called the desk persons, works under tremendous pressure and severe time constraint. The desk persons work well past midnight, and ensure that your newspaper reaches you on time in the morning.

The main consideration in editing is to tell the story in the fewest possible words. Condensation is essential because there is more material than can be used. The second consideration is clarity. Clarity is obtained by avoiding intricate sentence structure and by using familiar words. The third consideration is forceful expression. The sub-editor must constantly seek the most effective way to express the ideas of the story. The fourth consideration is respect for accuracy. It means looking out for small factual errors which disfigure an otherwise good story. A news story can be made to seem less or more important according to the judgement of the sub-editor. **The importance of a story depends on:**

1. the position given to it in the paper.
2. the amount of space given to it.
3. its presentation; in particular the headlines used and whether it is supported by photographs or not.

The features of a good story are a good selection of facts, accuracy and as vivid a description of the scene and atmosphere as possible.

EDITING AND ITS NEED

A newspaper office or news agency receives a large assortment of news items. These originate from different sources, mainly local sources and wires (teleprinter and telex). The news copy is written by experienced and inexperienced people, and, hence, lack uniformity. The copy has different shapes, follow a different style, and generally lack readability. The news reporters are the main news writers. They are in a hurry, especially in the evenings, when the news development gathers momentum. The copy written by them under pressure is bound to carry errors of all types. In any newspapers, there is always a shortage of space for all news items, which are received in the office. The newspaper's advertisement department is ever eager to grab the valuable but limited space. Moreover, newsprint and means of production cost a lot of money. Ultimately, a newspaper's success largely depends on the space and its most efficient, judicious and economic use. Hence, within the space set aside for news, as much news as possible needs to be packed to serve a divergent readership. Considering these factors; editing of the news copy becomes essential.

WHAT IS EDITING

All incoming news items, collectively called copy, is sifted, before being processed, to achieve a balance of news between that originating within the organization and that pouring in from outside. Sorting out and sifting also helps induce parity between the well-written articles and those written by the inexperienced reporters. In the process, the unwanted matter gets weeded out. Only the newsworthy stories are finally selected. These are checked for grammar, syntax, facts, figures, and sense, and also clarified for betterment, and are condensed for economy of space.

Space is a major constraint in any newspaper. Simple economic consideration dictates that space should not be wasted. Despite limitation of space, comprehensive coverage has to be given to news. Hence, all



information and facts that come in cannot be published. They have to be sized up, dressed and given an identity. This will ensure that every story earns its place in the paper's pages.

You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink. And, one you have placed your newspapers in the hands of your reader, you are faced with a similar problem: You cannot make him read it. But there is a way to persuade him to read your report, by the use of good headlines. Imagine a page of a newspaper without one single headline. The reader would be served a solid, grey, unpalatable mass of type, each story differing from its neighbour only in length. Apart from breaking up the page, headlines are needed to draw the reader's eye to each story, and attract him to read every word of it.

According to a noted writer, "A good story has it won impact. If you concentrate on putting things first and telling it in a straightforward simple way you cannot go wrong."

DEFINITION

News editing is tailoring news items or a news story to the required shape and size, using the right kind of expressions and symbols. A copy is edited to highlight the "news sense" in a story, and to bring uniformity of language and style in an issue of a newspaper.

NEWSROOM

The newsroom in a newspaper or a news agency office is the hub of the entire activity in a news organization. The Editorial Desk (also known as the Editorial Department or Copy Desk or News Desk) is the nerve centre of a newsroom. It is here that every day the newspaper issues are planned and made.

However, in a news agency, the news desk is the final stop before a story is sent to the transmission room or creed room for transmission on the wires. In news agencies, where news operations are computerized, such as the Press Trust of India (PTI) or the United News of India (UNI), the edited copy is transmitted directly to the newspapers by the News Desk itself.

DESK MANAGEMENT

The newsroom is headed by an editor or a chief editor or an editor-in-chief or a chief news editor. The designation varies according to the choice of the organization. He plans and directs the day's news operations. He is supported by a team consisting of the news editors, chief sub-editors (chief sub), senior sub-editors and sub-editors (sub).

The news desk usually operates in three shifts: morning, afternoon and night (till late in the evening, even up to 2.30 a.m.). In between, there are two link shifts-morning and evening-which are headed by the news editors or chief subs. They are also called 'slot' men. Ideally, in a newspaper, it is the news editor who plans and directs page making, while the chief sub helps and implements it.

In a news agency, news editors and chief sub-editor looks after the smooth functioning of the news desk. They plan and write "leads" (updated versions of developing stories). Here, there is an additional shift called "Extra Night" (from 2 a.m to 8 a.m.), which is managed by a senior sub-editor.

WHAT MAKES NEWS?

News has a number of characteristic elements. Five conventional determinants of the news values are:

- i) **Proximity:** The near the origin of news, i.e. the closer it is to home, the more is its impact. For example, on a particular day, there may be 45 deaths in a boat tragedy in Bangladesh. But on the same day, a local bomb blast that kills five people is sure to have more impact on the readers.
- ii) **Timeliness:** News grows old quickly. It decays and perishes fast. The more recent its occurrence, the more worthy it is. On the contrary, an event that happened, six months back. but is discovered and reported now could grab the front page. For example, the bank securities' scam involving Harshad Mehta and others, or the Bofors gun deal.



- iii) **Prominence:** Names make news and the newspapers like to use as many local names as possible. For example, if the Vice-chancellor of a university gets hurt while playing cricket, few people will take note of the incident. But, if a public figure like a minister is injured in a game, we have a more interesting story. When the film celebrity, Satyajit Ray, and the Nobel Laureate, Mother Teresa, were hospitalized, most papers carried everyday reports on their health.
- iv) **Consequence:** A reader's interest is aroused in a large measure if an event or occurrence affects him, and more so, if he participates in the event. He is eager to know what will this mean to him in the long run. How will it affect him and his family. For example, weather stories attract consistently high readership. A brief storm that leaves behind some casualties, and causes heavy damage in a town or city, will receive better coverage, will be given a good display, and attract large readership.

A steep hike in the prices of petrol, cooking gas, milk or an increase in water and electricity tariffs will have widespread consequences

- v) **Human interest:** Any interesting story about people and their peculiarities, and their infinite variety, make for wider readership. The human interest stories are pure identification. These are the little things that have happened, or could happen to yourself or to your neighbour or friends. These stories are worth little or nothing as news in any strict sense. Yet these are worth telling. For example, a 30-year-old woman with a baby in her arms is trapped in a building on fire. Such a story interests the readers.

The five elements cited above, generally, have a direct bearing on a majority of news stories. In addition, there are various other elements that could come into play in judging the news:

- i) To be newsworthy, a story must interest a large number of the readers.
- ii) A story's worth is determined by its impact on the readers. That's why the functioning of the government and the politicians receive a lot of coverage. On the contrary, lack of impact sometimes makes news; and also, the unusual, odd, provocative, intriguing, moving and educative make news

Scientific discoveries, even the hints of some, find space in the newspapers. For example, any seeming step toward the cure of cancer or AIDS is sure to generate headlines. even though the scientists might not have discovered the drug or vaccine. But the hint will be newsworthy. Archaeological events, relating the present to the past, could make headlines. The state and local news always rank as the major focal points in the newspapers. These are followed by (the order of selection depends on the Desk) - accidents, accords, agreements or pacts, announcements, business, the common people's interest (rise in milk or sugar prices), crime, cultural events disasters, education, elections. environment, fashion, health, labour, obituaries, 'and tragedies.

HOW TO EDIT A COPY?

A news story must play upon the event reported therein. Ideally, read every story, preferably thrice-once for familiarization, once while you edit, and the third time to check your work. If the story has no glaring problems, and if you fully understand it you would be ready to edit it. Now, you are concerned with spelling, punctuation, grammar, consciousness of expression, smoothness of writing, general accuracy and comprehensibility.

Format: A news story is divided in to two parts - the opening Para called the "intro" (introduction) or the "lead", and the body. The lead describes, simply and briefly, what happened. The body documents and elaborates the lead



Adequate attention should be paid to the lead, the most vital part of the story. Written in a single sentence, it should grab the reader and compel him to read the body. Normally, the lead is in about 25 words, or may be less. At the maximum, it should be limited to 40 words. The intro should be concise and crisp. It should not puzzle the reader, but summarize the story. Details should be dispersed and blended in the subsequent paragraphs.

Opening para: Conventionally, the news story has followed the "inverted pyramid" structure. The most significant information is placed at the top, the story's beginning and other details follow in their order of importance. Thus, the story tapers to smaller and smaller details, until it disappears. It may begin with the five Ws and one H, *i.e.*, the who-what-why-when-where and how lead. Basically, a news story should answer what, when and where. The answers should find place in the opening para. The three other questions - who, why and how - do not necessarily arise in all the news copy. In case they do, the answers are accommodated in the subsequent paras. Each succeeding para should add an essential detail without being dependent in content or style on what follows.

The inverted pyramid style enables

- i) a new story, to be self-contained, even if para are deleted at the bottom due to space; shortage [consequently, a coherent story is left at each point where it could be cut];
- ii) a hurried reader to skip over many stories in a short time by just reading the opening paras [those with greater interest could read a story completely];
- iii) a sub-editor, to write the headline gets in the gist in the first few paragraphs; and
- iv) a sub-editor to change the order of paragraph or insert new material, even after the matter has been sent to the press for composing.

If the news is not in the opening paragraph, trace out where it is buried. Bring it to the top, and also locate its supporting details. If there are two important news points or angles that vie for the top spot, assess and evaluate which one is better and catchier. This could call for rewriting the entire news item.

Next, see if the second paragraph supports the lead. It should deliver the promise made in the opening paragraph. The third paragraph should continue the development implicit in the lead and in the second paragraph. This helps a lot while trimming the story, and makes for easy comprehension by the reader. If there are any direct quotes, ascertain if these should be retained. Find out if there are opinions, and make sure these are suitably attributed.