

Reporters must be careful in writing crime stories so as not to portray a suspect as guilty of a crime before conviction.

**Crime and the Courts.** Criminal acts—robberies, murders, thefts, assaults—are just as interesting to the public as accidents and disasters. People want to know of dangers in their community and how effectively the police and courts are protecting them from those dangers. Because they must cover this important type of story as the need arises, reporters should be skilled at police reporting even if they aren't on the police beat.



**Newspaper reporter Annie Sweeney** lives a life of crime. She is not a criminal herself. She is a reporter covering the crime beat for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, a large daily newspaper in one of the nation's largest cities. She writes news articles about crimes committed in the city and the police officers who work to solve them.

Sweeney's biggest challenge, she says, is the sheer size of her coverage area. "It's a massive beat, with 24 separate police districts in the city." Another challenge is winning the trust of police officers, so they will give her information. "Some officers think reporters are out to make them look bad," she said.

**Meetings.** Most matters of public importance—building new schools, voting on zoning changes, granting new-business permits, raising taxes, hiring new police officers—are discussed at meetings. Such meetings are held by various public groups and government agencies—the city council, school board, chamber of commerce, special commissions appointed by the mayor, and others.

Reporters try to get a list of what will be discussed at such meetings—called an agenda—and will write a story announcing the meeting beforehand and another story after the meeting to report on what happened. Often such meetings are useful for finding related ideas for more in-depth public affairs reports or even feature stories, say, on the people whose homes may be affected by a new highway or factory.

**Documents and Stored Sources.** Besides knowing how to cover events and interview people, reporters also need good research skills. They must know their way around the public library, how to access online databases, and how to search for documents and records. The federal government, universities, and private foundations compile enormous amounts of information about the economy, occupations, population trends, the environment, and many other subjects of interest to readers. Most of these studies and reports are made available to reporters.

State and local governments also are treasure troves of information—from marriage licenses to tax records to restaurant inspection reports to building permits. Many states have *open records laws* requiring government officials to keep public records of their official activities. However, reporters must sometimes file a *freedom of information request* to force federal government agencies to make certain documents available.

**Special-Interest Sources.** The sources listed above are of a general nature and of particular interest to newspapers and broadcast stations that have mass audiences. Specialized media, such as magazines and Web sites catering to very narrow interests—sports cards, video games, travel, military history, cars—have their own types of specialized sources. Journalists who write for special-interest outlets often become experts themselves, as they learn more about the subject their publication covers.

State open records laws and the federal Freedom of Information Act are part of the checks-and-balances system of U.S. government. Public access to certain government records ensures that citizens can be fully informed about their government.



### Basic Tools for Reporting and Writing

The main tools for reporting are a pen and small notebook. Reporters must write quickly yet legibly. They must capture the important parts of an interview and be able to read their notes later, when transcribing their notes to a computer. Many reporters develop their own form of shorthand, or abbreviated writing, for more efficient note-taking.

A tape recorder, or even better, a digital voice recorder, can be useful, but should be used only to back up—not replace—note-taking. While taped interviews ensure accurate quotations, there are drawbacks. Some people feel uncomfortable about being recorded and may not speak as openly during a taped interview. Also, when writing a story, the reporter can get bogged down reviewing a lengthy recording instead of just flipping quickly through notes. Finally, there is always the danger of equipment failure (dead batteries, for example); without good written notes, the story would then be lost. It's best to take notes manually and use a recording only to verify facts or direct quotes.

Computers have become standard equipment for reporters, not just for writing articles but also for story research and for communicating with sources via e-mail. Reporters who travel in their work often have a laptop computer in addition to a desktop computer back at the office. Many reporters type their notes directly into a computer while conducting telephone interviews. Obviously, reporters need good keyboarding skills.

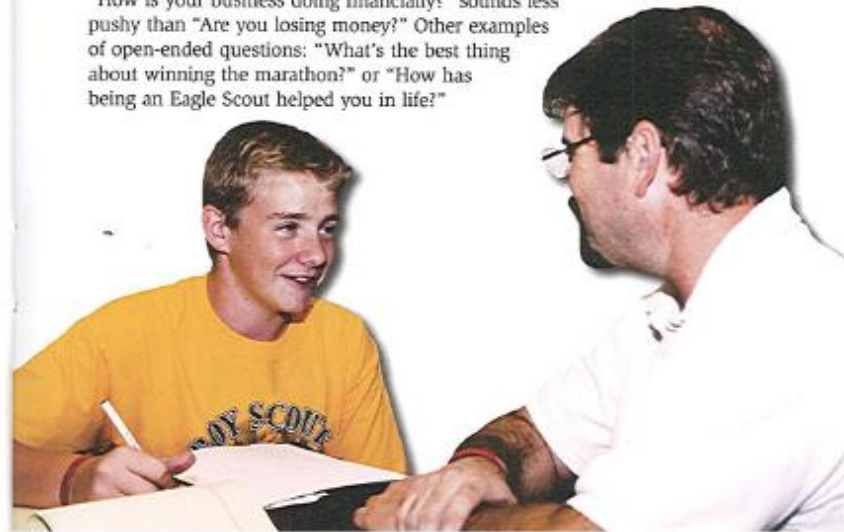
Reporters need a clear speaking voice and a firm but courteous manner when asking questions. An editor doesn't always have time to fix a reporter's grammatical mistakes later on, so reporters also need solid writing skills and knowledge of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Finally, reporters need curiosity and energy.

Many reporters use a specially shaped oblong notebook narrow enough to slip into their hip pocket.

### Conducting an Interview

Interviewing is a key way journalists gather information. Good interviews also make stories and broadcasts more lively and interesting. Developing good interviewing skills is essential to becoming a good journalist. Here are some pointers.

- Decide what information you need and whom to interview to get it.
- Research the interview topic so you know as much as possible beforehand.
- Use a notebook and pencil to take notes. If you want to record the conversation, ask permission first, but still take notes—recorders don't always work. Start by asking the person to spell his or her name and title. If you reach the person by phone, ask if it is a good time to talk. If it is not, ask when you should call back.
- Prepare questions in advance, and speak clearly and slowly. Use a *closed-ended* question to get a specific or concrete answer. For example, the question "How many weeks did you work on your Eagle service project?" will get a more precise answer than "How hard was your Eagle Scout service project?" Use *open-ended* questions to gently coax information from someone without appearing pushy. This gives a person flexibility when answering a question. For example, "How is your business doing financially?" sounds less pushy than "Are you losing money?" Other examples of open-ended questions: "What's the best thing about winning the marathon?" or "How has being an Eagle Scout helped you in life?"



- If you don't understand a response, ask the same question in another way, or rephrase the response in your own words and ask if you got it right. Use follow-up questions to delve deeper into a subject.
- Keep the conversation on track but be prepared to follow it where it leads, even if it departs from your script.
- Take note of the person's clothing, gestures, or other interesting attributes, such as photos and other personal effects that may add interesting details to your article.
- Save your hardest questions for last. By then, your subject should feel more comfortable and more willing to answer difficult questions.
- Ask for the person's permission to call back if necessary.
- Read your notes as soon as possible after the interview; rewrite them more legibly or type them while the conversation is still fresh in your mind.



**Radio journalist Bob Edwards** is one of America's most famous broadcast journalists. For 25 years, he hosted National Public Radio's "Morning Edition," a news program reaching 13 million listeners a week. During that time, he interviewed more than 20,000 people, including world leaders, actors, musicians, and average people who found themselves involved in the news of the day. Edwards gained a reputation as a master of the interview, asking brief questions in a low-key manner and letting his subjects do most of the talking. In July 2004, Edwards left

NPR to join XM Satellite Radio, where he hosts "The Bob Edwards Show," another morning program that features interviews with newsmakers.

"Give people the time to expand on their thoughts," he advises young journalists. "Don't interrogate them. Make it like a conversation. Listen to what is said and follow up. Be prepared with a list of questions, but be willing to depart from the list and go where the interview leads."

Broadcast news quotes serve a similar purpose to printed quotes—adding color and clarification to a story—but are usually much shorter. They usually take the form of a *sound bite*—a short recorded segment of the person being quoted. It is less common for the reporter or anchor to say someone else's quote, because that tends to be confusing to listeners and viewers. When conducting a broadcast interview, refrain from making any sounds while the respondent is talking. The "uh-huhs" and "I sees" common during normal conversation are distracting to a broadcast audience.

## Handling Quotations

Here are some practical tips for using quotations.

- When writing your story, use direct quotes—that is, the actual words spoken—when someone says something unique or important.

*"I'd rather have a tooth pulled than climb that mountain again!"*

*"I have decided to resign from the presidency, effective immediately," the president said.*

- Use direct quotes for *padding*, that is, to add variety to the tone of the text or to break up long passages of explanatory text.

*During May, all Friday afternoon classes will be held outdoors, Principal Mark Brown announced today, surprising teachers and students alike. "We all need some fresh air!" he said. Classes will be conducted in the school courtyard and in the grassy area behind the gymnasium.*

- Place direct quotations within quotation marks and attribute the quote. Use the person's whole name and title on first reference only. Later you can use just the last name or a pronoun (he or she).

*"Quotes add color to a story," says Bob Brown, editor of the Troop 14 newsletter. "They make articles more readable."*

- Use quotes sparingly. Quotes add emphasis and can clarify a point, but don't rely on quotes to tell the whole story. In addition, most speakers tend to ramble. So, for clarity, paraphrase what someone said by restating it in simpler, more direct language. When paraphrasing, don't use quotation marks.



## Writing for the News Media

A good news story is informative, easily understood, and interesting. It's a story that readers or viewers care about. Most readers skim through newspapers and magazines, glance at headlines, and read a few captions and maybe the first few sentences of some articles. If the story doesn't grab their attention, they move on. The same is true of broadcast stories. Here are some principles of news writing we will call the "five C's."

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Good writing  
can make any  
story better.

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### Make Your Writing . . .

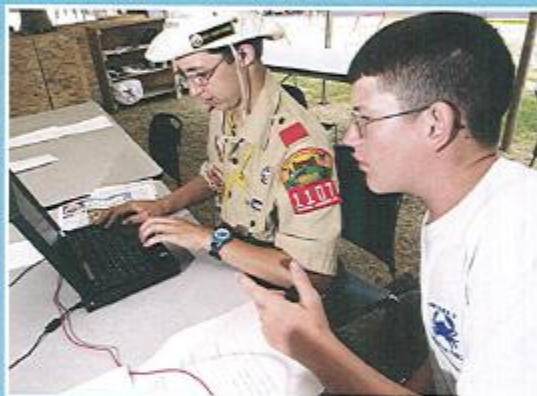
**Clear.** Writing should be immediately understandable. If the reader has to stop and reread a passage to get it, the writer has failed. Choose simple, familiar words and write simple sentences that aren't too long. Make the parts of a story flow in a logical, straightforward order. Be concrete ("Today's forecast is for thunderstorms and up to 2 inches of rain.") instead of vague ("Today's forecast is for bad weather."). Use transitions—connecting phrases or sentences—to introduce new subjects.

**Concise.** Make your writing short and to the point. Give readers a maximum amount of information in a minimum of words. There is always a shortage of time and space in the news media. Edit yourself. Remove wordiness (for example, change "at a later date" to "later" and "a small number of" to "few"). Cut out passages that are repetitious (saying the same thing twice) or redundant (saying the same thing in different words, such as "fellow classmates" or "totally destroyed").



## Hometown News

Scouts participating in national Scout jamborees have a unique opportunity to exercise their journalism skills by submitting jamboree news to their local newspapers, radio stations, and television stations. Hometown News correspondents get special training from nationally recognized journalists and teachers on how to write articles and scripts, edit copy, and select photographs and video to accompany their stories, and they have special access to interview celebrities attending the jamboree. They also will work with local media contacts to get their jamboree news to the folks back home. Ask your Scoutmaster how you can participate as a Hometown News correspondent at the next national Scout jamboree.



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**Complete.** A good story covers the subject thoroughly. Don't leave readers with unanswered questions.

**Correct.** Get your facts straight. Use correct grammar and spelling. Never spell someone's name wrong.

**Creative.** Look for ways to make your writing vivid and lively through careful observation, good reporting, and fresh expressions. Avoid clichés—don't use overused words and terms such as "spectacular view" and "devastating flood."

Be careful not to exaggerate or overdramatize a story, and avoid writing in a fancy, overly clever way. Let the facts speak for themselves. Solid reporting is at the heart of good news writing.



If children's fairy tales were written in the inverted pyramid instead of chronological style, they would begin with "They lived happily ever after" instead of "Once upon a time."

## News Story Structure

News must be written for easy reading. A news story is usually created using the inverted pyramid structure. The writer begins with the most substantial details, followed by less important details that can be trimmed, if necessary, without losing the gist of the story. In practice, this means starting with a lead paragraph that summarizes the story's most important facts, with information in descending order of importance in the middle, and ending with the least important details.

Novels and storybooks usually present events in the order in which they happen, or "chronological" order. The most important parts of the story usually come near the end, not the beginning. The chronological form keeps you reading clear through to find out what happens. But news stories are different. News writers put the essential information at the beginning, knowing that readers want the meat up front for information, not just for entertainment.

Compare these two stories written for a national readership. One is written in inverted pyramid style; the other in chronological style, as a storyteller might tell it to a group. As you read, think of reasons why the inverted pyramid style works better for newspaper readers than the storyteller style.

## INVERTED PYRAMID STYLE



BOWLING GREEN, VA., JULY 24—Under humid, overcast skies, a sea of buses full of Boy Scouts from across the United States flowed into Fort A.P. Hill this morning for the National Scout Jamboree. By day's end, some 40,000 Scouts and leaders are expected to arrive at this sprawling, 76,000-acre Army base for the 10-day celebration of Scouting skills

and camaraderie. The Scouts will erect 17,000 tents and 3,500 patrol kitchens in a matter of hours, making the jamboree site the fastest-growing city in America for this one day.

In a speech at a morning ceremony launching the jamboree, Secretary of the Army Thomas White said, "What a thrill it is to be here today at A.P. Hill with the

BSA, with our Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. The national Scout jamboree is the most exciting event in Scouting." An estimated 3,000 military personnel are on hand to assist the jamboree staff, composed largely of volunteers.

Also addressing the crowd was the Boy Scouts of America's Chief Scout Executive Roy L. Williams. "Today, volunteers from every walk of life have committed themselves to making this year's jamboree an experience of a lifetime for Scouts and troop leaders," he told the crowd assembled on the parade grounds near jamboree headquarters.

The first Scouts to arrive at the base were a contingent from High Point, Greensboro, and Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The Scouts scheduled a bicycle motocross race and challenging ropes course among their early activities. They chose these from a jamboree agenda that includes

archery, buckskin games, conservation programs, scuba, kayak, fishing in heavily stocked lakes onsite, and dozens of other special events. They also can walk along a heritage trail where they will learn skills common to the nation's pioneers and can visit the Merit Badge Midway, which resembles a county fair, where they can work on advancement. Many Scouts also admit to wanting to participate in an unofficial jamboree activity—trading Scout patches and emblems with their counterparts from across the country.

The national Scout jamboree has been held at Fort A.P. Hill since 1981. Before then, jamborees were held at various locations across the country. The first, in 1937, was held at the base of the Washington Monument on the Mall in our nation's capital. Since then, more than 600,000 Scouts and leaders have participated in the event.

CHRONOLOGICAL STYLE



BOWLING GREEN, VA., JULY 24—A contingent of Scouts from High Point, Greensboro, and Winston-Salem, North Carolina, were the first to arrive at the National Scout Jamboree at 7 A.M. Tuesday at Fort A.P. Hill.

In a speech at 10 A.M., Secretary of the Army Thomas White launched the event with opening

comments. "What a thrill it is to be here today at A.P. Hill with the BSA, with our Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines," he said. "The national Scout jamboree is the most exciting event in Scouting." An estimated 3,000 military personnel are on hand to help out the jamboree staff, composed largely of volunteers.

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After listening to the speeches, the North Carolina Scouts looked over a jamboree agenda that includes archery,

buckskin games, conservation programs, scuba, kayak, fishing in heavily stocked lakes onsite, and dozens of other special events. They can walk along a heritage trail where they will learn skills common to the nation's pioneers, or visit the Merit Badge Midway, which resembles a county fair where they can work on advancement. Many Scouts also participate in an unofficial jamboree activity—trading Scout patches and emblems with their counterparts from across the country.

When they had finished looking at everything the jamboree had to offer, the North Carolina Scouts scheduled a bicycle motocross race and challenging ropes course among their early activities.

The Scouts will camp in 17,000 tents and cook in 3,500 patrol kitchens spread around the 76,000-acre Army base.

The second version of the article has the same facts as the first, but it is not in proper news story form. The most interesting information is buried in the story. The first sentence is wasted on reporting the arrival of a particular Scout group, rather than giving an overview emphasizing the size and importance of this national event. The chronological story structure gives all the facts of the story equal weight, instead of emphasizing the important facts.

The inverted pyramid method of writing news serves two important purposes. First, it gives hurried news readers or listeners the most important information immediately. They need not read the whole article unless they have the time or interest. Second, it makes the editor's task easier. The inverted pyramid story can be cut from the bottom, for reasons of time or space, without losing essential details.

#### THE FIVE W'S AND H

The typical news story has two parts: the *lead* and the *body*. The lead—first sentence or two—summarizes the important facts. A good lead presents most of the six primary elements of a news event, the “five W’s and H”: who, what, when, where, why, and how.

If these six questions are answered in the first few sentences, the main elements of the story should be clear to the reader. The body of the story then elaborates on the important facts. The least important facts are saved for last.

#### The Feature Story

Most news stories are *hard news*, full of information of immediate importance to our lives. But readers also enjoy *soft news* that entertains or inspires us, examining the people, places, and things in our lives in a more relaxed way. Soft news often takes the form of a feature story, offering more human interest than the typical news article and sometimes greater depth and more colorful writing. An announcement about the troop's pancake breakfast coming up this Saturday is a hard news story. A profile of the Scoutmaster, revealing how he has led 10 of his troop members to earn the Eagle Scout Award, is a feature story.

You probably have read stories written using these common forms of feature stories.

**Personality profile.** People have interesting lives.

This popular story form may tell how someone overcame terrible hardship to succeed in life. It might cover a narrow escape, an act of heroism, a grand adventure, a secret pursuit, or community service.

**Human interest story.**

This story form looks beyond hard news headlines to reveal how current events are affecting real people. Examples include how tornado victims are coping with the loss of their homes; what area high school seniors are doing to prepare for college; how a local Scout troop is raising money for summer camp.



**Trend stories.** These stories report on what is happening in popular culture, such as the latest fads in clothing, hairstyles, music, or technology. Examples include articles on summer fashions or the popularity of portable music players.

**The how-to story.** People love to learn new skills. Whether it is how to cook a turkey, build a birdhouse, or plan a summer vacation, the how-to story can break a complicated task into a series of easy-to-follow steps, usually numbered.

**In-depth stories.** Sometimes a feature story is an extended report on a hard news topic. Say, for example, the city's subway trains are constantly breaking down. An in-depth story, through extensive research and interviews, may examine the causes of mechanical failures, what engineers are doing to correct the problems, and how repair work will affect the city budget and the likelihood of fare increases in the future.



A good exercise for any young journalist is to interview a person, probing with questions until you dig out something exciting. There is something interesting about almost everyone. Try your Scoutmaster or one of the assistants, or a friend's parent.

For more writing tips, see the *Communications* merit badge pamphlet.

### Finding Features

Finding an interesting feature story is pretty easy. Everyone has at least one interesting story to tell. It is often just a matter of talking to people to find out about their interests and experiences. Or, look at the daily headlines, then find people behind the headlines to write a feature story about. This is a way of personalizing the news.

Features should be written in a crisp, colorful style, often with more descriptions of actions and of people than a hard news story. Good feature writing, like all good writing, is helped by variety in vocabulary, sentence length, and sentence structure and by the use of active rather than passive verbs.

Features about interesting people and in-depth articles about community issues are important to newspapers. They often have their own section called something like "Lifestyles," "Living," "Style," or simply "Features."

Radio and TV news programs also make much use of features-type material. A good example is "All Things Considered," a daily National Public Radio program that includes, in addition to national news, slice-of-life stories about everyday people all over the country and the world. On television, news "magazine" shows like CBS's "60 Minutes," PBS's "Frontline," and NBC's "Dateline" offer compelling investigative reports and personal profiles.

### Writing for Magazines

Magazines were once filled with long, thoughtful articles that covered a subject in-depth. Readers are now busier and have far more types of mass media competing for their attention. They don't have the time to read a long article from beginning to end. Editors of many magazines have responded by breaking their pages up into shorter articles with more "points of entry." There may be information boxes, sidebars, maps, expanded captions, timelines, and various other graphical displays of information.

Magazines still offer greater depth of coverage than newspapers on specific subjects. But magazines often put less emphasis on the writing and more emphasis on creative editing or packaging of their content. For this reason, there is no one way to write for magazines any longer. There is no one "magazine style" of writing. Someone wanting to write for magazines will have to look carefully at the target magazine and see what specific style the magazine in question uses.

### Opinion Journalism

Journalists are among the best informed citizens in the community. They also have good skills in communicating ideas. For those reasons, journalists are in a good position to make informed judgments about events and to persuasively articulate those opinions. People want objective and factual news, but citizens also value the journalist's informed opinions about current events and issues.

The expression of informed opinion is almost as important as the publication and broadcast of objective news. But news media must take care to keep the two types of journalism separate. That is, opinions should be segregated into clearly labeled parts of the newspaper or broadcast, apart from the news columns and reports. That way, readers and viewers will know which parts are actual news and which are opinions about the news. Then they can weigh it all and come to their own conclusions.

### THE EDITORIAL

The editorial is an expression of informed opinion. Editorial writers try to persuade readers and listeners of their judgments on important issues—say, that the mayor's budget is wasteful or that the town park should be closed at midnight to cut down on crime. But editorial writers shouldn't simply express these opinions. Rather, they should carefully marshal the facts to make a strong case in favor of these judgments. Facts are just as important in editorials as they are in news writing.

Editorials seldom follow the inverted pyramid style. The introduction states the issue, and the middle factually describes important aspects of the issue. The conclusion summarizes the points and restates the writer's main opinion on the matter.

Many newspapers publish unsigned editorials, indicating that the judgment expressed is not just that of the writer but rather the opinion of the newspaper's editorial page staff or senior management of the newspaper.

**THE NEWS ANALYSIS OR BACKGROUNDER**

Newspapers or broadcast stations will sometimes clarify a complex news story with a *news analysis*, or *backgrounder*. In this special type of article or broadcast segment, a reporter who may have been covering the story for weeks or months steps back to explain current events by putting them into a broader context, explaining how a situation got to be where it is now. Examples might be an analysis of why test scores in local schools have plummeted in recent years or how proposed zoning changes might affect the downtown area. In this way the reporter interprets the news, sifting through months of reports to show readers which facts are most pertinent. This type of article, since it involves the reporter's opinions as well as facts, usually is clearly labeled as analysis.



**Columnist George Will** is a professional arguer. His job, he says, is to “make arguments.” Twice a week he picks an important topic out of the news—it might involve politics, education, popular culture, you name it—and writes his opinion about it. His columns appear on the op-ed page in the *Washington Post* and are syndicated to almost 500 other newspapers around the United States and Europe.

“A columnist’s job is not to tell people what to think but to provoke them to think,” Will says. “News articles present the facts of the story in the news pages of the paper. Columnists like me, with various points of view, hold those facts up to the bright light of opinion and cause people to decide for themselves what they think. As columnists, we’re paid to make arguments.”

**COLUMNS PROVIDE VARIETY**

Another form of editorial, or opinion, journalism is the *column*. An opinion column is a personal essay; such columns are an important part of journalism because citizens need a variety of opinions and judgments from various sources.

Columns come in many forms and address numerous topics. Columns that offer political or news commentary usually appear on the op-ed page, opposite the editorials. Other columns may appear in the lifestyle, metro, or community sections of the paper. The popular “Q & A” (question and answer) format is found in advice columns and in other columns written by experts that answer questions about topics such as health, real estate, auto care, home repair, travel, investing, or pets.

News media also often publish or broadcast personal columns written by members of the community. These might appear as guest columns on the op-ed page, or they could be regular columns focusing on local community activities.



**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

News media are open to the opinions of their readers and listeners. Online forums on media Web sites, guest editorial columns, and the letters to the editor section of the newspaper provide excellent opportunities to practice editorial journalism.

Try your hand at it. Write a letter to the editor of your newspaper, or a guest editorial for your radio or TV station. Express your opinion about global warming, school funding, wilderness preservation, political candidates, or other issues about which you feel strongly. You might be surprised at the reaction you get. Many editors are delighted and surprised to hear from younger readers, and might be more inclined to give more space to a letter from a citizen younger than those they usually hear from.

Here's one example.

Dear Editor:

I was saddened to read your news article about the litter problem in our community. I was especially concerned about the large number of aluminum soft drink and beer cans found in the park. There's really no excuse for that.

Boy Scout Troop 62 has been collecting aluminum containers—mostly cans—for recycling for more than a year now. We collect about 5,000 cans a month, then we take them to a recycling center. We use the money we earn to help pay for campouts and Scouting equipment. We also donate some to charity.

But our troop really is not recycling just for the money. We're doing it because it helps clean up our community, and it helps Scouts to serve where we are needed. If anyone wants us to help by recycling their aluminum, please bring it to Parkwood Elementary School on Olson and Elm streets between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on the first Saturday of each month. A Scout will be there to take your aluminum.

Mike Brown, age 14  
123 Oak St.  
Central City

**CRITICAL REVIEWS**

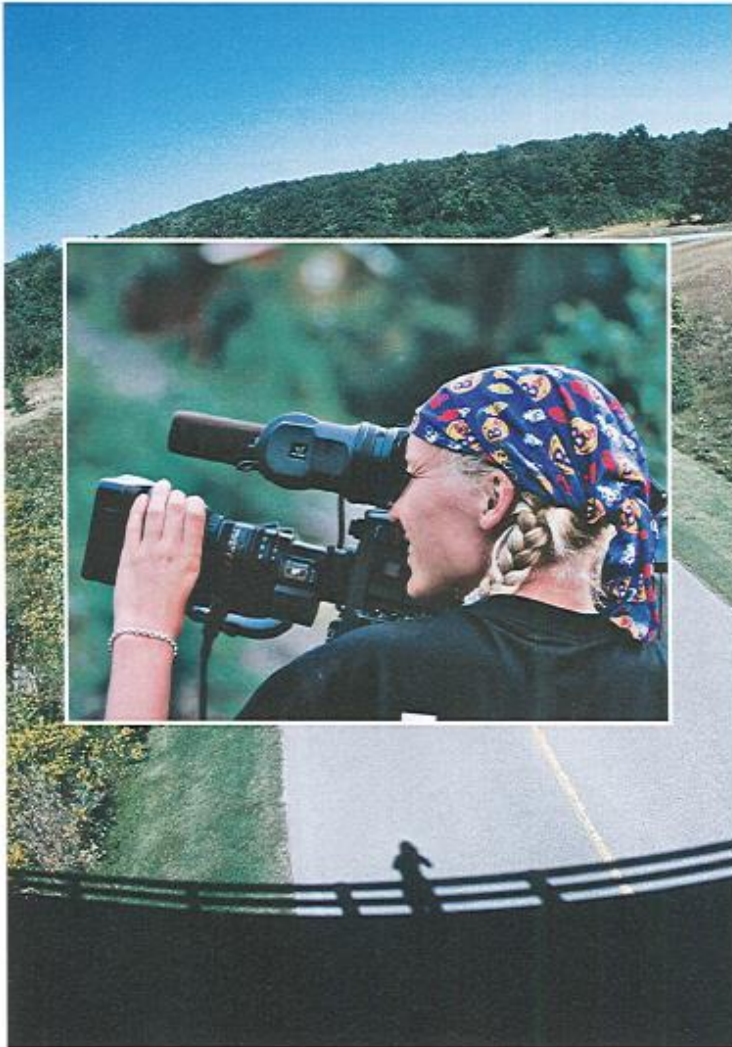
Another form of opinion journalism is the critical review. It provides readers and viewers with judgments about products and services that are promoted and sold. These may include books, movies, television shows, concerts, sporting events, computer hardware and software, restaurant meals, hotel accommodations, and musical recordings.

A critical review should not be just praise or criticism about a performance or product. The review should present an objective report based on facts. The review should explain with illustration and example, not simply express opinions, positive or negative.

**THE ROUNDUP**

Magazines often use this special type of review to cover consumer products, travel destinations, or services. The roundup can be applied to any subject category in which there are many different examples to examine. Roundups usually start with an overview about some trend, say, the popularity of digital music players. Then it proceeds with individual descriptions of numerous examples of the devices, explaining the best features and shortcomings of each one. A travel roundup may briefly profile a wide range of dude ranches, say, or island resorts that specialize in scuba diving. A service roundup might describe the pluses and minuses of all the Internet service providers available in a local community or offer a reviewer's guide to area barbecue restaurants, each one rated for food quality, atmosphere, and service, with one to four stars.





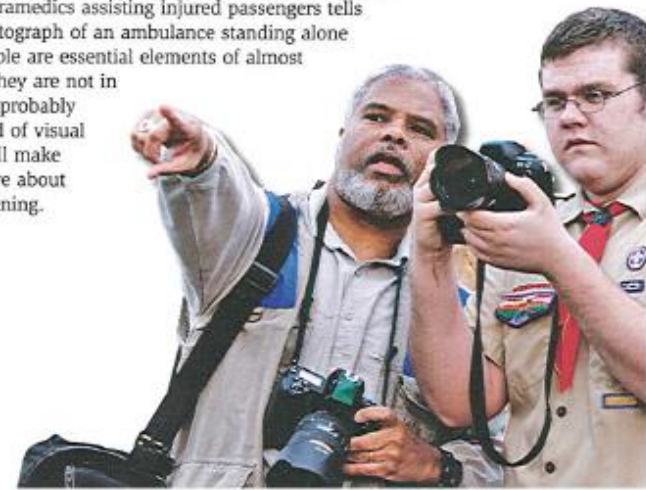
## Visual Journalism

Images are an essential part of journalism. Practically every newspaper and magazine uses pictures. In fact, the impact of its cover photo often determines how well a particular edition of a magazine sells on the newsstands. And of course visual images, both still and in motion, are vital to TV news and online news sites.

### News and Feature Photography

Photography is an area of journalism where the amateur and the hobbyist can break in on a freelance basis. If you want to sharpen your photography skills, take your camera with you when you travel or go an outing. Snap away if you see something that catches your eye. It might be a bike rally, a dozen turtles sunning themselves on a log, or members of your Scout troop wakeboarding.

Taking a pretty picture is not what is important in journalism. A good photo should tell a story or make a statement. A photo of paramedics assisting injured passengers tells a story; a photograph of an ambulance standing alone does not. People are essential elements of almost all events. If they are not in the picture, it probably is not the kind of visual image that will make the viewer care about what is happening.

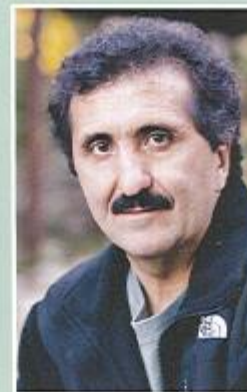


Let's return for a moment to the opening of the Maple Hills skate park. Frank Brown's editor sent a photographer to the opening ceremony with him. The photographer shot a lot of pictures there: the mayor speaking, skaters trying out the ramps for the first time, the mayor conversing with members of the civic association, an accomplished skateboarder doing a stunt.

Should you ask permission to take a stranger's picture? It is polite to do so but not always possible. If your subject is clearly involved in a newsworthy event, such as a traffic accident or fire, you can take pictures without legally invading anyone's privacy. But for a feature story that is clearly not breaking news, you should be more respectful of people's privacy and talk to them about your story before asking to shoot pictures. If you are taking photographs to be used commercially—in an advertisement, for example—the subjects must give their approval and usually must sign a model release form.



**Photojournalist Pete Souza** likes variety. He has worked at daily newspapers, for national magazines, and as an official government photographer for the U.S. president. Nowadays he is stationed in Washington, D.C., as a national photographer for the *Chicago Tribune*. He travels the country and the world to cover stories of interest to newspaper readers back in Chicago.



Souza, whose photo assignments have also taken him to Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Northern Ireland, says photographers will be of increasing importance to journalism. "Newspaper readers don't like to read long articles every day. Sometimes a story can best be told in pictures."

A professional photographer will take many shots, just to be sure of getting the right one. A *Boys' Life* photographer on assignment, for example, may shoot hundreds of pictures for one story. However, only a handful will appear in the magazine.

Today's cameras have advanced features that make the photojournalist's job easier. For example, many cameras have built-in motordrives or, in the case of digital cameras, memory buffers, which let you take multiple shots of fast-moving events just by holding down the shutter. This feature allows the photographer to take more photos in less time and capture several stop-action shots of one motion—that skate stunt, for example. Another useful feature is automatic bracketing, in which the camera shoots three or more pictures in rapid succession, all at a slightly different exposure (each a bit lighter or darker than the last). The idea is that one of the three will be just right.



Digital video cameras have dropped dramatically in price, making it more affordable to try videography. Footage can be loaded into a computer, edited with voice-overs and text labels, then burned to a DVD. You can create short news programs at home that might be of acceptable quality for use by a local public access cable channel. Be sure that your video tells an actual story—say, of your troop’s 100-mile bike ride—and that it is presented in a news style.

### Pictures Need Words

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but every picture still needs a few words of explanation. This information, printed on or near a photograph, is called a *cutline* in newspapers and a *caption* in magazines. Whatever you call them, they are very important. They are often the first (and sometimes the only) part of the article that gets read. Here are some tips for writing good captions and cutlines.

- When you take a picture, jot down the names of all who appear, so the names can be printed in the caption. Make sure you spell the names correctly. If possible, sometimes it is helpful to take an “I.D.” photo. *Boys’ Life* photographers out on assignment, for example, will line up all the Scouts involved in the story for a group shot, then will take down the names and birthdates of each Scout, left to right. Having a person’s birth date lets the editors of *Boys’ Life* get the ages right in their story, even if the photograph is published months after the picture was taken.
- Use the present tense in writing captions. “Scouts from Troop 19 reach (not *reached*) the summit of Mount Baldy.” This makes the action of the photograph seem more immediate.
- Don’t state the obvious in a caption. “Scout sits on fallen tree beside the trail” is obvious. “Scout Bob Smith rests after hiking 12 miles of a 20-mile hike” brings new, interesting information to the picture.
- Include details in the caption that aren’t found in the accompanying article. If possible, interview the photographer—and the people pictured—to find out exactly what was going on in the picture, then use a quote. This adds color and immediacy, as in, “‘I was so tired I had to sit for 20 minutes before going on,’ Bob said.”
- When laying out an article, use a different style of type for the captions and cutlines so they are easily distinguished from the main article.

### Art, Cartoons, Typography, and Design

Journalism also needs graphic artists and designers. Many feature articles carry line drawings instead of photographs. In jurisdictions where cameras are not permitted in the courtroom, television stations and newspapers use artists to draw individuals who cannot be photographed.

Graphics artists also produce maps, charts, symbols, tables, and *logos*, which are names or labels in a particular style used repeatedly to establish identity. Some magazines and the editorial pages in newspapers use the work of editorial cartoonists. Their cartoons project a particular point of view, often pointing up something ironic, absurd, or dishonest. The Sunday paper would not be complete without the Sunday comics, too. The readers of



some magazines—like *The New Yorker* and *Boys' Life*—expect a collection of slice-of-life cartoons with every issue. These cartoons often give a periodical more appeal. What would *Boys' Life* be without “A True Story of Scouts in Action”?

Besides artists, journalism also needs graphic designers, the people who assign the artwork to be created and who lay out the articles, finding just the right arrangement of text, display type, photographs, white (or blank) space, and illustration. On magazines, the director of design is among the top positions on the editorial staff, because the visual impact of the publication is so important.

Graphic design gives a publication or Web site an identity, a personality that readers associate with that publication alone. Compare, for example, the screaming headlines and the startling photographs in the *National Enquirer* with the much more conservative look of the *New York Times*, which uses more dignified photographs and more thoughtful headlines. Even without reading the articles, you know from the look alone that the *National Enquirer* is going to be lurid and sensational, while the *New York Times* is going to be reasonable and informative.

Don't overlook the importance of *typography*, or the style of type, to a publication's design. Typography helps convey a publication's personality. Designers speak of families of typefaces, such as Times New Roman or Bookman Old Style. Within each family are sets of *fonts*, or all of the characters (letters, numbers, punctuation, symbols) in a particular size and style of type. Times New Roman, 12 point, italic, is one font within the Times New Roman type family.

Typography can help readers understand the layout and architecture of a magazine, newspaper, or Web site. For example, all the display headlines might use one style of type and all the department labels (such as “Horoscope” or “Pets”) a slightly different version within the same type family. Above all, typography should be readable. Be particularly cautious about placing type on photographs, which can make the letters hard to read.

### Roman:

GARAMOND *Caslon*  
CENTURY OLDSTYLE ITALIC  
BODONI GOUDY

Gothic:  
FRANKLIN  
PUBLICITY GOTHIC  
UNIVERS 65 *Avant Garde*

### Text:

Goudy Text Old English

### Script:

*Berthold Script*  
*Brush*  
*Medici Script*

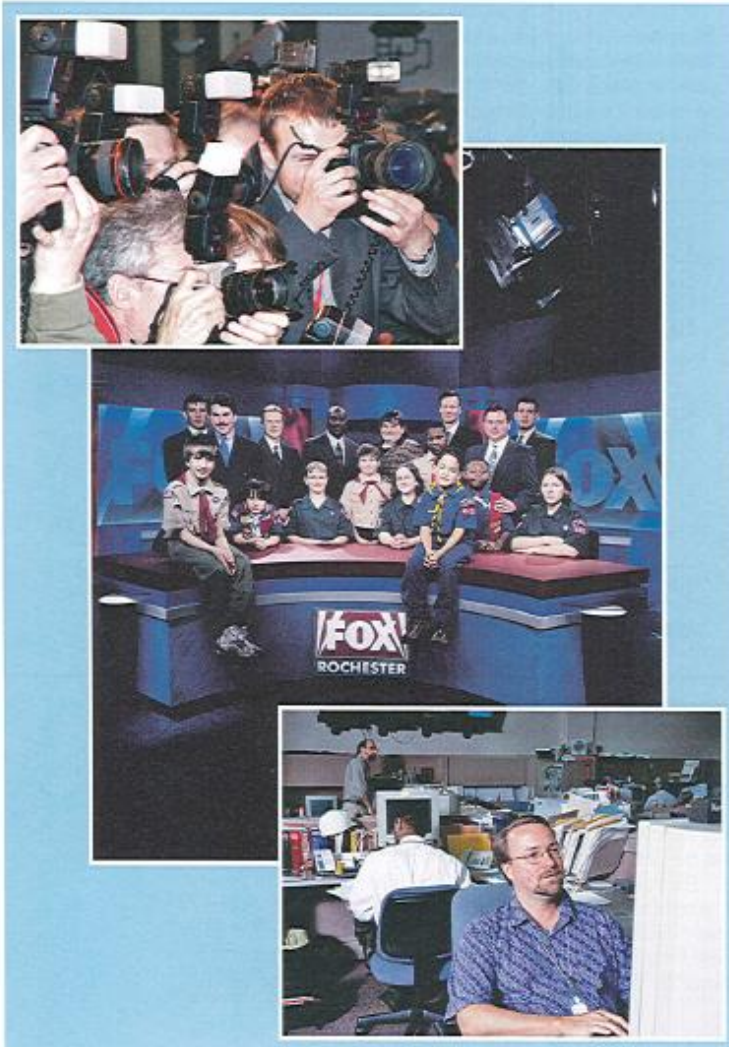
*Freestyle Script*  
*Snell Roundhand*  
*Debutant*

### Novelty:

*Cabaret* **BALLOON BOLD**  
Branding Iron **BROADWAY**  
**PARIS FLASH**

Media Web sites need designers with specialized skills and a good sense of graphic design, just like the designers of print publications. They should also be familiar with the software programs or computer programming languages that bring interactivity and enhancements to a Web page. Some media Web sites will use programmers to help designers. Others require that the designers do the technical work themselves.

For practical purposes, a site will often use a set of forms, or templates, with an established style. Updates—such as today's news headlines, pictures, and body text—can be imported into these templates without reinventing the design each time. This allows the designer to work on special sections or new features.



## Careers in Journalism

The field of journalism needs people with a wide variety of talents. Journalists should be broadly educated, not just focused on one subject area. They need an informed view of the world, and being conversant in history, geography, politics, and science helps. A wide-ranging knowledge helps journalists distinguish the important from the unimportant, the right from the wrong, the true from the false in any number of subject areas they might write about.



Journalists should be intelligent, well-organized, and observant. They should be curious about everything—people, current events, public affairs, science, sports, you name it. Journalists should like people—you must deal with news sources, public officials, editors, managers, and celebrities. If you are shy, you will need to learn how to overcome this trait.



Whenever you use the Internet, be sure you have your parent's permission in advance.

Above all, journalists should be good communicators. An ability to write well is at the heart of many of the positions in journalism. Even as a print journalist you should be able to speak well, because news is often gathered orally—over the phone or in person.

### Preparation for a Career

In journalism, hands-on learning such as through an internship can give you the upper hand. With recent advances in technology, never before has it been easier to try your hand at being a journalist. Anyone with a computer, some basic software, and an Internet connection can do a grassroots form of journalism.

- Write or contribute to blogs, or post messages about current events at newspapers' reader forums.
- Design and write an online magazine ("Webzine").
- Create a newsletter and e-mail it to your readers as an attachment, rather than paying the postage to send hard copies through the mail.
- Podcast your own radio-style show as an audio file on your computer and then distribute it to listeners over the Internet.



**Always be on the lookout for good story ideas. Take your still or video camera with you when you travel. If you see a newsworthy event, click away and get the images to a local newspaper or TV station as quickly as possible. They may buy your pictures or footage and give you credit.**

### GET INVOLVED

Most high schools have a newspaper or literary magazine. Some have Web sites, radio facilities, and even TV studios. Join a club or class that produces high school media. If your school doesn't have a newspaper or Web site, help create one.

Don't overlook writing letters to the editor of your local newspaper or a magazine as a way to get your ideas published. You can also practice journalism for your Scout troop by starting—or contributing to—a troop newsletter or Web site. The same applies for almost every other group. Does your place of worship or sports league have a newsletter? If so, get involved; if not, start one.

The fastest way to improve your skills in journalism is to have your work edited by professionals, so try to write for established news outlets. Sometimes the local news media have opportunities for eager young people who want to get started. If you have proved yourself on the school newspaper, you might get an assignment as a stringer. You might be asked to cover a school function or sports event that the regular newspaper or radio-TV staff can't cover. With some luck, you might land a part-time or summer position at a local newspaper or broadcasting station. You might also try your hand at freelance writing for magazines.

One of the best ways to get into journalism is by studying it in college. In high school, take as many English, history, social science, and science classes as possible. If your school has journalism courses, take them and also get involved with your school paper.



**Online reporter and editor Tim Richardson** is creating the future of journalism. As the assistant director of new media for the online edition of the *Naples Daily News* in Florida, his responsibility is to reach the people who aren't reading the print edition. He does it by posting a wealth of information on the newspaper's Web site: Not only all the

stories that appear in print, but also enhanced news features such as audio and video files, blogs, reader forums, opinion polls, photo galleries, scanned documents, story archives, and multimedia special sections.

Like most local news operations, *naplesnews.com* focuses on local news, not national or international coverage. "We don't try to compete with CNN, Fox News, or the *New York Times* Web sites," he says. "We're hyper-local in our focus. People won't find out what happened at the county commission meeting this morning anywhere else but on *naplesnews.com*."

### The Study of Journalism

More than 100 colleges and universities have journalism departments accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. Colleges that don't have journalism courses may have campus media that you can work on to get journalism experience while earning your degree in another field.

A journalism degree calls for studying a broad range of subjects. Journalism students take courses in the arts, humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, and often foreign languages. Hands-on learning includes newswriting, editing, photography, computer-assisted reporting, design, television production, typography, communication law, and journalism history. Special fields of study include advertising and public relations. An important part of most journalism educations is working as a staff member on a campus newspaper or broadcast station.

**Internships Open Doors.** Many journalism programs help students find paid or unpaid positions at print or broadcast outlets. Getting good internships has become increasingly important in the field. An internship can lead to one's first post out of college, simply because employers often prefer to hire someone they have worked with as an intern rather than a stranger.

To land an internship, first check with your college adviser about media outlets that regularly take interns from your school. If assigned internships are part of the school's journalism program, you probably would earn academic credit, too. If necessary, look for opportunities on your own by contacting public relations firms and advertising agencies. Check their Web sites or call the companies to inquire. In addition, some professional organizations operate summer internship programs for students (see the resources section at the end of this pamphlet).

**The Value of Networking.** Practice networking, or keeping in touch with a wide range of people in the field. It may land a good internship or other opportunity for you. Start networking in high school. Contacts you make while working for the school paper may be valuable to you years later. The same is true of contacts you make in college. The other journalism students you meet, your professors, and the editors you meet during internships, all can become valuable sources.

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Build your network. Everyone you work with as you progress in the field can become a good contact for the future.

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### Progressing in Journalism

How do you work your way up in journalism? You can travel various routes, depending upon interests and opportunities. One route is to go up the management ladder; another is to become a specialist. A third route is a combination of the two.

A typical progression if you began as a college intern at a newspaper might lead to an entry-level position as an editorial assistant and cub reporter. You might then advance to general assignment reporter. If you chose the management ladder, you could seek editing assignments and then progress to assistant city editor, city editor, national editor, sports editor, features editor, or editorial page editor, and a few years as a copy editor. You might someday become managing editor or editor in chief. The only position above that would be the publisher or owner of the newspaper.

An entry-level employee at a magazine would start as editorial assistant, then assistant editor, associate editor, senior editor, and then, perhaps, managing editor. Upper-level positions include executive editor, deputy editor, and editor in chief. Because of the trend toward special-interest magazines, the profession provides opportunities to become an established authority in a wide range of subjects.

In broadcast journalism, opportunities to specialize are more limited than in the print media. The broadcast news reporter can rise through the management ranks to become the anchor (or on-the-air announcer of news), news director, or general manager. Or, a reporter can specialize in an area of broadcast news coverage, such as government and politics, sports, weather, entertainment, or other fields.

### The Rewards of Journalism

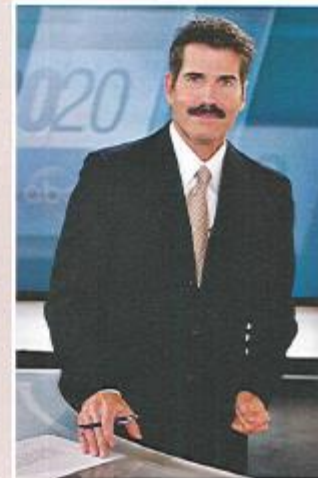
Most journalists don't get rich, but salaries in the field have improved in recent decades. The marketplace determines salary levels. If your skills, or your specialty, are in great demand, you will get paid more. As a general rule, news outlets with larger readerships or audiences will pay more than those with smaller audiences. Journalists with large national audiences, such network TV anchors or syndicated columnists, can make very high incomes indeed.

Journalists make many positive contributions. By telling the public of upcoming events, they help people get the most out of life in their communities. By reporting on good causes, they aid in the development of worthwhile institutions. These personal satisfactions help make any field in journalism meaningful and worthwhile. If you decide that this is the field for you, welcome!

**TV anchor, commentator, and investigative reporter John Stossel** sheds light on American life like no other newsmen. His reports for ABC News have included provocative stories such as *Are We Scaring Ourselves to Death?*, which examined exaggerated fears of things like chemicals and crime; *Family Fix: Help! I've Got Kids*, which explored what to do with kids who disobey; and *Junk Science: What You Know That May Not Be So*, which exposed several popular scientific claims as bogus.

For years, Stossel worked as an investigative reporter for ABC's popular newsmagazine "20/20" and also did hour-long special reports. In 2003, he was promoted to coanchor. He now has a popular weekly segment entitled "Give Me a Break," that points out some absurdity about modern life, from popular culture to government regulations.

Stossel has received 19 Emmy Awards. The National Press Club has honored him five times for excellence in consumer reporting. He has also won the George Polk Award for Outstanding Local Reporting and the George Foster Peabody Award.



## Journalism Resources

### Scouting Literature

*Cinematography, Communications, Computers, Graphic Arts, Law, Photography, Public Speaking, Radio, and Theater* merit badge pamphlets

For more information about Scouting-related resources, visit the BSA's online retail catalog (with your parent's permission) at <http://www.scoutstuff.org>.

### Books

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- Kalbfeld, Brad. *Associated Press Broadcast News Handbook*. McGraw-Hill, 2001.
- Sloan, W. David (editor). *American Journalism: History, Principles, Practices*. McFarland & Company, 2002.

### Organizations and Web Sites

#### American Society of Journalists and Authors

1501 Broadway, Suite 302  
New York, NY 10036  
Web site: <http://www.asja.org>

#### American Society of Magazine Editors

Web site: <http://www.magazine.org>

#### Broadcast Education Association

Web site: <http://www.beaweb.org>

#### Freedom Forum First Amendment Center

Web site:  
<http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org>

#### Media Law Guide

The Freedom of Information Center  
133 Neff Annex  
University of Missouri–Columbia  
Columbia, MO 65211  
Web site: <http://foi.missouri.edu>

#### National Association of Broadcasters

1771 N Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
Web site: <http://www.nab.org>

#### National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting Inc.

Web site: <http://www.nicar.org>

#### The Poynter Institute

Web site: <http://www.poynteronline.org>

#### Society of Professional Journalists

Eugene S. Pulliam National Journalism Center  
3909 N. Meridian St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46208  
Web site: <http://www.spj.org>

### Student Media Sourcebook

National Scholastic Press Association  
Associated Collegiate Press  
2221 University Ave. SE, Suite 121  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
Web site: <http://studentpress.journ.umn.edu/sourcebook>

### Student Press Law Center

Web site:  
<http://www.splc.org/legalresearch.asp>

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