

# CONTENTS

---

## PART ONE

### THE FOURTH ESTATE 1

---

#### CHAPTER 1

##### Today's Media 1

###### How Reporters Cover the News 5

*General Assignment Reporting/Working a Beat/Specialty Reporting*

###### The Newspaper Newsroom 7

*People in the Newsroom/The News Meeting*

#### CHAPTER 2

##### Ingredients of News 11

###### What Is News Treatment? 12

*Hard News and Soft News/The Need for Flexibility/The Gatekeeping Process*

###### What Makes News? 15

*Criteria for Newsworthiness/Other Factors Affecting News Treatment*

###### Pitching News Stories to Editors 24

*Specificity/Succinctness/Enthusiasm/Monitoring the Media*

## PART TWO

### THE RUDIMENTS 27

---

#### CHAPTER 3

##### Qualities of Good Writing 27

###### Roy Peter Clark: Fourteen Traits of Good Writers 29

*Trait 1 (Seeing the World as a Source of Ideas)/Trait 2 (Discovering and Developing Ideas)/Trait 3 (Collecting Information)/Trait 4 (Working on Leads)/Trait 5 (Putting Action into Your Verbs)/Trait 6 (Bleeding Rather Than Speeding)/Trait 7 (Accepting Drudgery)/Trait 8 (Rewriting)/Trait 9 (Trusting the Ear)/Trait 10 (Storytelling)/Trait 11 (Treasuring the Reader)/Trait 12 (Taking Chances)/Trait 13 (Reading)/Trait 14 (Writing Seamlessly)*

##### Robert Gunning: Ten Principles of Clear Writing 32

*Principle 1: Keep Sentences Short, on the Average/Principle 2: Prefer the Simple to the Complex/Principle 3: Prefer the Familiar Word/Principle 4: Avoid Unnecessary Words/Principle 5: Put Action into Your Verbs/Principle 6: Write the Way You Talk/Principle 7: Use Terms Your Reader Can Picture/Principle 8: Tie In with Your Reader's Experience/Principle 9: Make Full Use of Variety/Principle 10: Write to Express, Not to Impress/Where to Turn Online*

#### CHAPTER 4

##### Summary Leads 43

###### Concepts: Principles of Summary Leads 45

*The Inverted Pyramid/The Five W's and H/The Thought Process Behind the Lead/Multiple-Element Summary Leads/Summary Leads on Features/A Reminder: No Two Leads Are the Same*

###### Writing a Summary Lead 51

*How Many Words?/Avoiding Clutter Leads/Avoiding Buried Leads/Determining the Focal Point/Positioning the Time Element/Writing in the Active Voice/Providing Attributions/Revising the Lead/Summarizing the Story and Enticing Readers*

#### CHAPTER 5

##### Organizing a News Story 61

###### Inverted-Pyramid Style 62

*An Example of the Inverted Pyramid/Organizing an Inverted Pyramid: Guidelines to Follow/Analyzing an Inverted Pyramid/Improving an Inverted-Pyramid Story: An Example of Revision*

###### Hourglass Style 71

*Advantages of Hourglass Style/An Example of Hourglass Style: A Bizarre Accident/Organizing an Hourglass/When to Use the Hourglass*

###### Circle Style 73

*Advantages of Circle Style*

###### Block Style 74



**Other Alternatives 75**  
*Feature Leads/Ending with a Twist*

CHAPTER 6

**Developing a News Story 77**

**Deciding Which Stories to Develop 78**  
*A Story's Impact/Other Factors Influencing Coverage*

**Covering Developing Stories 79**  
*Phases of a Developing Story/Chronology of a Major Story*

**A Checklist for Developing Stories 87**

CHAPTER 7

**Quotations and Attribution 89**

**Using Quotations 90**  
*Types of Quotations/When and How to Quote/  
Guidelines for Direct Quotations/Use of Soundbites  
for Broadcast*

**Attributing Quotations 100**  
*When and How to Attribute/Placement of  
Attributions: Six Guidelines/Anonymous Sources/  
Information and Quotes from Internet and  
E-Mail Sources*

**A Checklist for Styling Quotations  
and Attributions 110**  
*Rule 1 (Introducing a Direct Quotation)/Rule 2  
(Introducing an Indirect Quotation)/Rule 3 (Ending  
an Indirect Quotation)/Rule 4 (Commas and Periods)/  
Rule 5 (Colons and Semicolons)/Rule 6 (Question  
Marks)/Rule 7 (Quotations within Quotations)/  
Rule 8 (Closing Quotation Marks)/Rule 9 (Closing  
Quotation Marks at the End of a Paragraph)/Rule 10  
(Interrupted Quotations)/Rule 11 (Dialogue)*

CHAPTER 8

**Special Leads 113**

**Types of Special Leads 114**  
*Narrative Leads/Contrast Leads/Staccato Leads/  
Direct-Address Leads/Question Leads/Quote Leads/  
"None of the Above" Leads*

**Creating Effective Leads 125**  
*Using Strong Verbs in Leads/Choosing a Lead: Which  
Lead, and When?*

**A Checklist to Help Writers Decide  
on the Lead 126**

CHAPTER 9

**Features 128**

**What Is a Feature? 129**  
*Hard News and Soft News/Types of Features*

**Writing and Organizing  
Feature Stories 136**  
*Guidelines in Organizing a Feature Story/Guideline 1:  
Find the Theme and Develop the Story/Guideline 2:  
Write the Lead/Guideline 3: Write the Body/  
Guideline 4: Provide Background Information/  
Guideline 5: Use a Thread/Guideline 6: Use  
Transition/Guideline 7: Use Dialogue/Guideline 8:  
Use Voice/Guideline 9: Write the Ending*

**Rewriting and Collaboration 142**  
**A Checklist for Effective Features 144**

PART THREE

**GATHERING  
INFORMATION 145**

---

CHAPTER 10

**Interviewing 145**

**Doing the Research 146**  
*Using the Newspaper Library/Using Other Resources*

**Setting Up the Interview: Guidelines  
to Follow 147**  
*Guideline 1: Make an Appointment/Guideline 2:  
Identify Yourself/Guideline 3: Consider Your Source's  
Convenience/Guideline 4: Describe the Story/Guideline  
5: Dress the Part/Guideline 6: Be on Time*

**Conducting the Interview: The Questions  
and Answers 149**  
*Structuring an Interview/Asking Questions/  
Establishing Rapport/Handling Hostile and  
Uncommunicative Sources/Making and Using  
Observations/Logistics*

**After the Interview 162**  
**A Checklist for Interviews 163**



## Computer-Assisted Reporting and Research 164

Precision Journalism 165

Online Research 167

Newspaper Archives and  
Commercial Databases 168

Using the Internet 168

Internet Tools: E-Mail 168

Internet Tools: Listservs 169

*Uses for Listservs/Joining Listservs*

Internet Tools: Newsgroups 171

Internet Tools: Chat 172

Internet Tools: World Wide Web 172

The World of the World Wide Web 173

*Web Sites with Useful Information/Web Sites  
That Help You Find Web Sites with Good  
Content*

Search Tool Categories 175

*Directories/Search Engines or Spiders/"Shaft" Search  
Sites/Metasearch Databases/Scouting Reports/Web  
Rings/Guessing*

Can You Trust Internet Information? 177

A Checklist to Consider When Looking  
at Web Sites 177

*Criterion 1: Authority/Criterion 2: Accuracy/*

*Criterion 3: Objectivity/Criterion 4: Currency/*

*Criterion 5: Coverage*

## By the Numbers 180

Why Numbers Matter 181

Basic Math Skills 182

Seeking Help 184

*Where to Turn Online*

How to Write with Numbers 185

Surveys 186

Conducting a Survey: Basic  
Considerations 187

*Formulating the Questions/Testing the Questions/  
Developing the Sample/Gathering Data/Analyzing  
the Data/Writing the Story*

## Reporting Surveys: Rules and Guidelines for Journalists 194

*General Considerations/Avoiding Distortions:*

*James Simon's Top-10 Factors*

## PART FOUR

## BASIC ASSIGNMENTS 199

---

### CHAPTER 13

## Obituaries 199

Selecting Obituaries to Publish 202

Content of Obituaries 203

*Basic Information in Obits/Sources of  
Information/Where to Turn Online/Ensuring  
Accuracy in Obits*

Obituary Styles 210

*Terminology*

Writing Effective Obituaries 211

*Capturing the Flavor of a Life/Writing  
Interesting Leads*

### CHAPTER 14

## Speeches and Press Conferences 213

Speeches 214

*The Reporter and the Speech/Covering a Speech*

Press Conferences 219

*The Press Conference as a Media Event/Covering a  
Press Conference*

### CHAPTER 15

## Weather and Disasters 229

Covering and Forecasting Weather 230

*Example: A Snowstorm in Fairbanks/Types of  
Weather Stories/Weather Terminology: AP Style*

A Checklist for Weather Stories 235

*Where to Turn Online*

Covering Disasters 237

*Elements of Disaster Coverage/Two Problems  
for Reporters*



**Broadcast Writing 245****Broadcast Style: Guidelines for Writers 246***Rules of Style***A Checklist for Broadcast Writers 250****Writing for Radio 251***The Radio News Story, or “Wrap”/Similarities and Differences Between Writing for TV and Writing for Radio***Writing for Television 254***The Bicycle Wheel/The Bicycle Wheel Process/Formatting Television News Scripts***A Checklist for Effective Broadcast Journalism 261***Understand Technology/Learn to Perform/Keep Soundbites Short and Frame Them Appropriately/Emphasize the Last Sentence of a Story/Approach Television as a Unique Medium/Approach Radio as a Unique Medium/Learn to Interview Deeper than Skin Level***Multimedia Journalism 264****Storytelling on the Web 265***Back to the Past/From Print to Pixels/Smooth Sailing for Surfers/Deeper Story for News Hounds/Breaking News Updates***Involving Readers 269***Blogs—A New Type of Participatory Journalism***Story Structure 270***To Link or Not to Link—That Is the Question/Story Summaries—A Type of Link/Sidebars (Information Boxes)***Slide Shows (Photo Galleries) 272***Hot Tips for Cool Cutlines***Write Tight, Talk “with” Readers 274***Finding Your Voice/Writing for Interactive Graphics/Storytelling on Multiple Platforms***Multimedia Storytelling on the Web 275***Seven Steps to Success/Examples of Multimedia Storytelling***Your Future as a Multimedia****Journalist 279***The Backpack Journalist/Skills/Global Yet Personal/The Bottom Line***News Releases 281****Evaluating News Releases 282***Factors to Consider/Which Releases Will Be Used?/Understanding the PR-Journalist Working Relationship/Identifying Newsworthy Stories/Writing the News Release/Disseminating News Releases***Using News Releases 290***Avoiding Free Ads***BEATS 293****Multicultural Reporting 293****How Race Is Lived in America 297****Factors in Multicultural Coverage 299***Our Changing Population: Demographics/The Role of the Media: Recommendations of the Kerner Commission***Trends in Multicultural Coverage 301***Status and Goals of Cultural Reporting and Cultural Sensitivity: An Overview/Diversity in Cultural Reporting: A Commitment to Change***Approaches to Multicultural Coverage 306***Guidelines for Media and Reporters/Where to Turn Online***A Checklist for Improving Coverage 310***Guidelines for Racial Identification***Terminology for Multicultural Coverage 312****Local Government and Public Meetings 313****Understanding Municipal Government Systems 314***Forms of Municipal Governments/A Day on the Beat*



## **Council Meetings 316**

*Before the Meeting/Writing the Meeting Story: An Inverted-Pyramid Story/After the Meeting*

## **A Checklist for Covering**

### **Public Meetings 321**

### **The Local Government**

### **Budget Process 322**

*Covering the Steps in the Budget Process/Developing Sources of Information/Examining Budgets/Writing the Budget Story/Working with PIOs*

## **A Checklist for Covering**

### **Local Government 331**

*Where to Turn Online*

## **CHAPTER 21**

## **Police and Fire 335**

### **Staffing Police and Fire Beats 336**

### **Covering Police and**

### **Fire Departments 337**

*Mastering Organizational Structures/Developing Sources/Using Departmental Records*

### **A Day on the Police and Fire Beat 343**

*Assignments: The Day Begins/On-the-Scene Coverage: A Major Fire/Making the Rounds/Writing the Stories/Final Deadline: The Day Ends*

### **A Checklist for Beat Reporters 351**

*Where to Turn Online*

## **CHAPTER 22**

## **Courts 354**

### **A Demanding Assignment 355**

### **The Judicial System 356**

*The Federal Judicial System/State Judicial Systems/Types of Court Cases*

### **Criminal Cases 357**

*The Basic Criminal Process/Reporting Criminal Cases*

### **Civil Cases 371**

*The Basic Civil Process/Reporting Civil Cases*

## **A Checklist for Covering**

### **the Courts 375**

*Where to Turn Online*

## **CHAPTER 23**

## **Sports 377**

### **Trends in Sports Coverage 380**

*Sports Writing Styles/High School Sports Coverage/College Sports Coverage*

### **Reporting Sports 386**

*Working with Statistics/Going beyond Statistics/A Showcase for Good Writing/Beyond the Game—Contracts, Courtrooms and Boardrooms*

### **A Checklist for Sportswriters 392**

*Where to Turn Online*

## **PART SIX**

## **ADVANCED ASSIGNMENTS 395**

---

## **CHAPTER 24**

## **In-Depth and Investigative Reporting 395**

### **What Is an In-Depth? 396**

### **A Reporter as Investigator 397**

*Reporter's Accountability*

### **Gathering Information for an In-Depth 399**

### **Smelling a Story 400**

*Conducting Research/Interviewing/Going Undercover*

### **Writing an In-Depth Story 407**

*Finding the Right Lead/Using Bulleted Paragraphs to Summarize Findings/Using Anecdotes and Observations/Writing a First-Person Article*

### **A Checklist for In-Depth and**

### **Investigative Reporting 409**

## **CHAPTER 25**

## **Business News and Other Specialties 411**

### **Business 412**

*The Business Reporter/The Business Story*

### **A Checklist for Business Reporting 419**

### **Consumers 419**

*Trends in Consumer Journalism/Consumer News Stories/Where to Turn Online*

**A Checklist for Reporters Specializing in Consumer Journalism 422**

**Technology 422**

*Expanding Coverage in New Technologies/Stories about Technology/Becoming a Technology Writer: Tips for Reporters*

**Environment 424**

*Coverage of the Environment/Two Reporters and Their Jobs/Becoming an Environmental Writer: Tips for Reporters*

**PART SEVEN**

**BEYOND THE WRITING 427**

**CHAPTER 26**

**Law 427**

**The First Amendment and the Press 428**

**Libel 429**

*Libel Law and Libel Suits/What Leads to Libel?/Defenses against Libel/Libel in Cyberspace: A New Frontier*

**A Checklist for Dealing with Libel 440**

*Guidelines for Reporters/Guidelines for Potential Defendants*

**Reporters and Their Sources 442**

*Background/The Branzburg Case/Shield Laws*

**Fair Trial versus Free Press 446**

*Background: An Ongoing Conflict/Balancing Conflicting Rights: Guidelines for the Bar and the Press/Press Coverage of Trials/Electronic Coverage in Courtrooms*

**A Warning about Aggressive**

**News Techniques 451**

**Campus Rights and Restrictions 452**

*Where to Turn Online*

**CHAPTER 27**

**Ethics and Fairness: Responsibility to Society 455**

**Concerns about Credibility 457**

**The Fairness Movement 458**

**Some "Best Practices" 461**

**Responding to the Public 464**

**A Theory of Press Systems 465**

*Authoritarian System/Libertarian System/Social Responsibility Theory*

**The Media and the Public 466**

*Criticism of the Press/The Press Responds*

**The Ethics of Journalism 469**

*Codes of Ethics*

**A Checklist for Doing Ethics: Ask Good Questions to Make Good Ethical Decisions 470**

*Ethical Issues*

**Thoughts to Take with You 481**

**In Conclusion: The Journalist's Responsibility 483**

*Where to Turn Online*

**APPENDIX A: GANNETT NEWSPAPER DIVISION PRINCIPLES OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR NEWSROOMS A-1**

**APPENDIX B: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS STYLEBOOK AND BRIEFING ON MEDIA LAW RULES A-3**

**APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY A-19**

**PERMISSIONS AND CREDITS C-1**

**INDEX I-1**