

SEM IV – SEC 2 – CREATIVE WRITING – Meenakshi Krishnan & Arunav Banerjee

Unit 4. Writing for the Media

Media writing values **brevity**: short words, short sentences, short paragraphs, short stories...because media compete for people's time. The more time you take to communicate, the less likely people are to hear what you have to say. Therefore, in writing for the media, brevity is a very important factor. You have to strike a balance between expressing all that you feel is essential, and retaining the interest of the audience.

The other factor to be kept in mind is the **subject**. What will you write about The choice of subject will depend on 'newsworthiness', which is measured by the number of 'news values' that the subject demonstrates. These news values are:

- Impact – how many people does the event affect?
- Timeliness – how recently did it occur?
- Prominence – how well known are the people involved?
- Proximity – how close, geographically, did it take place?
- Conflict – does it involve some kind of disagreement or fight?
- Weirdness – how unusual is it?
- Currency – is it related to something people are talking about or interested in?

To sum up, the three essentials when writing for the media are:

- Identifying the elements of the story that will be of the greatest interest to the audience
- Structuring the story to convey the information as effectively as possible
- Presenting the story in a way that will make maximum use of the medium and engage the maximum number of the audience for the maximum length of time

The factor common to the various forms of media is that **they are all different ways of communicating news and information to the general public**. So, newspapers, magazines, television, radio and even the internet are forms of the media because they communicate to anyone who reads, watches, or hears them.

The media can be broadly divided into three types, based on the method of transmission – the Print Media (which includes newspapers and magazines), the Broadcast Media (Radio and Television), and the New Media (The Internet or The World Wide Web). Each of the three types of media presents different challenges and opportunities for the writer.

The Print Media

- includes newspapers and news magazines.
- The kinds of writing which are prevalent in the Print Media include basic reportage/'hard news' (where you are reporting the facts of an incident/event).
- Feature writing (where you deal with a particular subject in wider/deeper detail than in reportage), interviews, book/film reviews, travel writing, editorials and personal columns.
- Some modes of creative writing present in this medium are not necessarily governed by the fact of 'newsworthiness' for example, advertising.
- All of these varieties of writing, within the Print Media, present different challenges to the writer
- The greatest challenge is to keep it **concise**, to convey the news effectively.
- The other challenge will be **stylistic** in nature.
- You have to be **objective** and factual when reporting an incident or an interview, but can be extremely **subjective** when it comes to something like a review, editorial or a personal column.

The Broadcast Media

- Radio and Television, present a different set of challenges for the writer

- Where Radio is concerned, the **verbal** element is very important; the news items will still be in the written form and will be read out by the presenter
- What differs is the length – the entire report cannot be very long, as it will test the patience of the listener
- The important thing is that, the report must not seem to be written or read but appear to be; the style must not be too loose or casual
- An entertainment show on music would require the host of the programme to be comparatively relaxed and somewhat informal
- The script would have to be written carefully to convey that feeling
- Educational programmes, interviews involve a greater amount of creativity like radio plays
- Advertising will also be primarily verbal and succinct, conveying in as short a time as possible
- Most of what applies to Radio holds true for Television too
- The actual verbal content of a Television news report might be significantly less than it is for Radio
- The presence of the visuals means that a lot of description will not be required
- Television also offers other opportunities for creative writing; serials and documentaries are prominent on television
- The writing for these will be in the form of scripts or screenplays
- Advertisement on television is also script-based.

The New Media

- The newest medium of all – the Internet or the Worldwide Web
- Does not have any fixed form of writing
- Open to all forms of writing, including fiction, poetry, drama, creative non-fiction, news, interviews and advertising
- All of this can exist not only in written form but also in audio or the audio-visual format
- Writing for the web requires the same skills as writing for the Print Media, but also requires the additional skill of attracting potential readers to the page
- Brevity is important...not many readers will be willing to scroll down a long page to read

Advertising

- Advertising does not constitute a separate medium; it is present in all media, but the factors which control it are different from other modes of communication
- Advertising is commercially oriented – it spreads information about products and services
- The motive of advertising is to make the public aware of the existence of a particular product or service, and persuade them to use it
- At a very basic level, advertising tries to create a need in the consumer for the product which is being advertised
- Since advertising is present in all three media, the styles of writing for these will vary widely
- The advertising campaign for a product will include all the media
- The kinds of advertisements for each of the media will focus on different elements, while keeping something common, like the slogan

There are various kinds of advertising, classified according to their purpose. These range from those advertising products to those which serve public/social interests:

- **Standard Advertising** – the kind that we see everyday in the various media. This type of advertising aims to promote a particular product or service with the intention of persuading the target audience to purchase them.
- **Public Service/Social Responsibility Advertising** – this type of advertising answers a public need. It is generally produced and distributed by government agencies or non-profit organisations along with private advertising and mass media companies. Environmental messages, disease eradication campaigns and announcements by police are some types

- **Counter-Advertising** – focuses on the alleged fraud and misrepresentation in advertising. It tends to counteract the allegedly false claims, to ensure that the consumer is made aware of certain aspects which are hidden. The anti-tobacco campaigns as well as the campaign for awareness of rights of consumers are part of this type
- **Advocacy Advertising** – this is closely related to social responsibility and counter advertising. It is a type of advertising that is intended to communicate a viewpoint about a controversial topic relating to the social, political or economic environment. Issues like drug addiction, alcohol consumption, rising crime rate etc., which are perceived as conditions affecting public welfare are taken up through advocacy advertising
- **Image Advertising** – this kind is designed by businesses to improve their image, rather than to promote a particular product. At one level, this kind of advertising is affiliated closely with public relations rather than with marketing. It promotes the name, the image, the personnel, and also the reputation of the advertiser. The intent is to enhance the image of the company in the eyes of the target audience. The advertisement may choose to emphasize the various areas of human activity in which the company is involved; it may create awareness of the different products which they produce; the advertisement may also show how the company is a good place to work.

The Fundamentals of a Good Advertisement are:

- It should grab the attention of the viewer/reader/listener – There should be some element in the advertisement - slogan, headline, illustration or the layout – that arouses sufficient interested
- It should promise some benefit – Something in the ad should promise the reader or the listener that they will benefit from what the advertisement asserts
- It should be credible – The premise of the ad must be believable. Do not make any outrageous claims about the product
- The advertisement should be persuasive – It should sell or generate the need for the service you offer, and project your service as better
- It should generate desire – The ad must create a desire to want to avail of the product/service
- It should prompt to action – The ultimate aim is to generate action on the part of the reader or listener; to cause the reader to want to buy your product.

Unit 5. Preparing for Publication

3 steps to take before submitting your manuscript for publication:

- Revising and Rewriting
- Proof Reading
- Editing

Some pointers about the **physical** and **mechanical details** regarding the appearance of the message:

- Type and print your manuscript on a good grade of A4 size paper
- Use a standard font
- The margins should be 1.5 inches at the top and the left, and about 1 inch at the bottom and right, without excessive hyphenation
- All material except name and address should be double-spaced
- Place your name and address on the left about 2 inches down from the top and write the label on the right
- The title is normally placed in capital letters about a third of the way down the page
- The text begins two spaces below this
- The pages, after the first, should be numbered in Arabic numerals along with your last name in the upper right corner
- Check the spelling and grammar very carefully.

How to get published:

- Establish clear goals for your work
- Have an answer to the question – 'I am writing in order to.....'
- Dream big – where would you like to see your work/
- Establish the unique identity of your work – how is it different from all other books in the market? Who will read your book and why? What are you offering the world?
- Start working on a 'fabulous title' that will instantly say what the book is about or be so intriguing that the reader is compelled to read on
- Decide which publishers you will approach
- Enlist a famous person in the field to write a foreword or an endorsement.

Summary:

- Writing is an act of communication and the ultimate test of your writing is its readability
- While writing, be well informed and passionate about what you are saying and convincing in your point of view
- Choose your form carefully and make sure your structure matches with it, as do the words you have chosen to express your ideas and feelings
- Choose your distinct style and medium
- Make sure that you have mastered all the techniques that will facilitate your expression
- Minimize the distance between your reader and yourself
- Revise carefully and consciously with the clear aim of learning and improving
- Use proof reading techniques judiciously to help you write better
- Editing helps you to make choices and also arrange your material in the most effective manner
- Pay attention to the content and the appearance of your manuscript when you prepare to submit it.