



335en07

REPORTING AND EDITING

“He put his left foot down first”. He then declared, “That is one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind. “Date July 20, 1969. Time 02.56 GMT. American Niel Armstrong becomes the first man to step on the moon. The Astronaut stepped on to the Moon’s surface that was a sea of tranquility. Twenty minutes after the first opening of the hatch of the Eagle landing craft. Armstrong had earlier reported safe landing of the lunar module ”.

Do you find anything wrong in this? Do you find it smooth reading? Is there a flow?

Now read the following;

“July 20, 1969. Man takes first steps on the Moon. American Niel Armstrong has become the first man to walk on the Moon. The Astronaut stepped on to the Moon’s surface in the sea of tranquility at 02. 56 GMT, nearly 20 minutes after first opening the hatch on the Eagle landing craft. Armstrong had earlier reported the lunar module’s safe landing. As he put his left foot down first Armstrong declared: ‘That is one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.’”

Don’t you find the second one easier to read? That is because the first one was an unedited reported copy and the second one an edited copy.

You have seen how a report is being edited into a story. Reporting and editing are two important and indispensable parts of the print media. Good reporting and good editing make for a good news story, whether it is in a newspaper, magazine, radio, television or online.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- explain how to gather news ;
- identify the sources of news ;
- list the qualities of a good reporter, editor and sub-editor ;

- describe copy editing ;
- discuss the functions of a newsroom.

7.1 DEFINITION

Reporting :

By reporting, we mean collection or gathering of facts about current events or background material required for a news story or feature.

Reporters do it through interviews, investigations and observation. Reporters are given directions by editors to cover a particular event, known as assignments. They may be general assignments or special ones. Reporters write the news stories, which are called copies.

Let us consider an example.

Now read the following.

“Prime Minister declared that the yields from the explosion are in line with expected values. Date May 11, 1998. India steps short of declaring itself a nuclear weapon state. It conducts three nuclear explosions. It was in Pokhran that India exploded its first nuclear device on May 18, 1974. Code of the operation was Smiling Buddha. May 11 was Buddha Jayanthi. The code this time was Operation Sakthi. This time the explosions include a fusion device, a low yield device and a thermo nuclear device”.

A reporter should write with clarity, objectivity and accuracy. A reporter who covers a particular area or subject specialises in that.

Editing :

A person who edits is called an editor. By editing, we mean preparing a news report for publication, telecast or broadcast. Editing is a process by which a report is read, corrected, modified, value-added, polished, improved and made better for publication. Condensation is also part of editing.

Try and read the following. Do you find it easy to read?

May 11, 1998. “India conducts three nuclear explosions at its Pokhran nuclear test site. These include a fusion device, a low yield device and a thermo nuclear device. Prime Minister declares that the yields from the explosions are in line with expected values. India stops short of declaring itself a nuclear weapon state. On May 18, 1974 India exploded its first nuclear device, code named Smiling Buddha. After about a quarter century, on Buddha Jayanthi day, May 11, 1998, Operation Sakthi was carried out ”.



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Fig.7.1: Pokhran nuclear site

The copy of the report has been improved by the editor and is therefore easier to read and understand.

The editor also decides whether photographs or other images or graphs should be used along with the report. A good editor needs creative skills, command over the language, ideas to improve the copy, and correct judgement about how much importance should be given to a particular news item.

7.2 HOW TO GATHER NEWS

You must have heard of the Mahabharata and the great battle of Kauravas and Pandavas. Before the beginning of the battle, Dhritarashtra, who was blind by birth, was given an offer by Sreekrishna that he would be given sight to watch the battle. But Dhritarashtra declined and, instead, wanted to hear reports of the war from Sanjay. Sanjay thus started narrating the war scene to Dhritarashtra. He, thus, became the first war correspondent.

Sanjay was reporting the war. His reporting was correct, descriptive, factual, impersonal and narrative.

Have you ever thought about how the reporters get information about stories that appear in television news, in news papers, in radio bulletins or on the internet.

We call a news report a news story. Unlike fiction, these are factual stories - events that have happened or things that are going to happen. Like a good story teller, the reporter has to narrate the story before the reader or listener or viewer.

Reporters get news stories from various sources. The following are the main sources:

- a) **Listening:** A reporter can get good stories by listening to others. While traveling in a bus, the reporter overhears the conversation between two passengers. “Did you go to the town today? There was a terrible accident. A school bus overturned. Twenty children were taken to hospital.” By listening to this, the reporter gets a clue to a story. He now has to find out more details of the accident. Which school bus was involved? How many children were injured? Were there any casualties? In which hospital were they been admitted? The reporter goes to the accident site to collect all this information. The reporter’s job does not end there. He has to inform the photographer about the accident. The next day’s newspaper should also carry some good photographs about the accident.
- b) **Covering events :** “India-Pakistan cricket Test in Mumbai”, “Kumbhmela in Haridwar”, “ International Film Festival in Goa “, these are all events. Reporters cover these events for their publications, channels or new bulletins. The coverage depends upon the importance and magnitude of the event. A small panchayat level meeting will be covered locally, whereas a state level function will get wider coverage. If it is a national event, it will receive nationwide attention.
- c) **Press conferences:** Another major source of news is the press conference. Leaders of political parties hold press conferences regularly. Ministers also hold press conferences to announce various programmes and policies of the government. Business houses arrange press conferences to launch their new products. Organisations and Associations also held press briefings.
- d) **Reports and statements:** These are another major sources of news items. Various commissions and committees submit their reports to the Government which are a goldmine as far as news reporters are concerned. Statements or press releases by leaders and businessmen also make news.
- e) **Parliament and Assemblies:-** Parliament and state assemblies when in session generate lot of news. Questions in both the houses of parliament, proceedings, calling attentions, zero-hour mentions, debates and various acts passed by the parliament also make news. The general budget and railway budget are presented in parliament. State budgets are presented in state assemblies.
- f) **Police sources:** The police are in charge of law and order. So the police always maintain a close vigil about various activities of citizens. Reporters get details about crime, accidents etc. from police sources.
- g) **Interviews:** Interviewing people connected with an event or incident is a very common practice used by reporters to get details. Television reporters take the opinion of people which are called reactions. Occasionally, reporters of newspapers and channels conduct long interviews with important people.



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News can also originate from government and non-government sources, courts, airports, railway stations, educational institutions, hospitals etc.



INTEXT QUESTIONS: 7.1

1. Define the process of reporting and editing.
2. Name any five sources from where reporters get news stories.

7.3 TYPES OF NEWS

There are different kinds of news stories. According to their nature and character, they can be classified as follows.

- a) **Hard news** : These are general in nature. Some can be breaking news. These are news items that require immediate publication. These cannot wait.



Fig.7.2: Hard news



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- b) **Soft news** : These are light stories. They are not urgent news stories. But soft stories can make interesting reading. Readers like such stories. These can be about a person, an event or about a developing situation.



Fig.7.3: Soft news

- c) **Features**: These are detailed, in-depth stories. In newspapers, they are carried in the magazine section.



Fig.7.4: Feature



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- d) **Profiles of Newsmakers:** These are generally about people in the news. Readers may not be aware of such persons. So through their profiles, they are introduced.



Fig.7.5: Newsmakers

- e) **Human interest :** These are often stories about the plight of individuals or families. For eg. When tsunami waves struck the coastal areas, there were touching stories about people who lost their near and dear ones, houses etc.



A flooded road in Raigad district near Mumbai following heavy rain, on Monday, Narandra Vaskar

Fig.7.6: Human interest story

- f) **Backgrounders:** If a major event happens, readers are curious to know whether there is any precedent or background to that. In other words, they are eager to know the history of such incidents. Backgrounders provide such information.



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Fig.7.7: Backgrounder



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7.4 BASIC FACTS ABOUT REPORTING

a) Finding the lead

Ravi is a reporter of a newspaper in a metro city. One evening, he gets information that an aircraft has crashed near the airport. In the next five minutes, he gets more information regarding the accident as follows.

It was not a passenger aircraft.

The PM was travelling in that flight.

It was an Air Force flight.

It was coming from Mumbai to Delhi.

Only ten passengers were on board.

The PM's personal Secretary and five other senior officials were also on that flight.

The accident happened because of engine failure.

No survivors in the accident.

Ravi now has to write the story. He has to find a lead. He thinks of various options as the first sentence. Finally, he arrives at the following sentence as lead - ***"PM dies in plane crash"***.

Can you think of a better lead?

The lead, or opening sentence, is the most important part of a news story. A good lead attracts readers' attention to the story. The same is the case with listeners and viewers. A good lead will catch their attention and compel them to go through the story.

Like news stories, leads also can be hard or soft. A hard lead is suited for serious stories. A soft lead is ideal for human interest stories and feature type reports.

b) Finding the angle.

The angle of a news story is its most vital part. A news story is based on the angle it takes. Once a reporter gets all the facts about a story, the choice of selecting the right angle begins. The reporter has to decide it quickly because the story has to be reported at the earliest. So every reporter faces this question of deciding the angle.

Let us see how an angle is selected from a set of facts given. The following salient points are from the union budget presented in parliament.

A National Programme to be launched for the elderly.

Government to establish 16 Central Universities.

Income tax exemption limit hiked, exemption limit for women tax payers increased.

Farmers to get Rs. 60,000 crore agricultural debt relief package.

Excise duty reduced from 16 percent to 14 percent.

Small cars, two and three- wheelers to cost less.



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The reporter has to select the most appropriate angle from this. Though all these facts are important for a reader, the reporter has to decide the most important one. Considering that India is an agricultural country and more than 60 percent of the people depend on farming for a living, it will be appropriate if we decide the debt relief for farmers as the angle of the story.

While deciding the angle, the reporter has to weigh various factors. If the reporter is working for a newspaper, the angle should be selected accordingly. If the reporting is for an economic paper, then the angle changes accordingly. If it is for a foreign agency, then the angle changes for overseas readers.

c) *Body of a story*

Once the lead is finalised and the angle decided, then comes the body of the story. It is the fleshy part. All the facts and figures comes in the body.

While writing the body, a reporter has to be fluent in the language .A good story requires an easy flow. By this, we mean the reader should be able to sustain interest till the last sentence.

For writing a story, the most commonly used method is of an inverted pyramid.

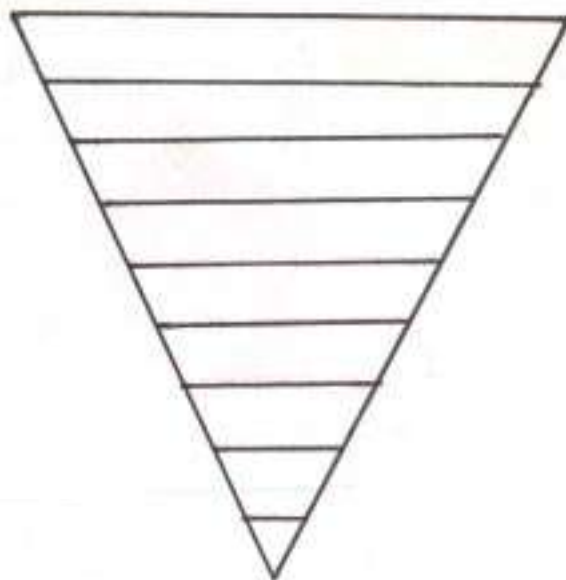


Fig.7.8: Inverted pyramid



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By inverted pyramid, we mean, while going to the bottom, the importance will narrow down. So when writing the story the reporter should put the crucial points in the opening paragraphs. The less important matters can come in the following paragraphs. Towards the end, the reporter should give least important details of the story which even if not published does not affect the overall impact of the story.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.2

1. Mention two items of hard news which you have read in today's newspaper.
2. Mention two soft stories you have read recently.

7.5 QUALITIES OF A GOOD NEWS STORY

Reporters have a busy schedule. Many a time, they do not get sufficient time to write the story after collecting all the facts. So they work in haste. They are left with very little time to write, type or key in their stories.

But even in such a situation, reporters should keep in mind that the reader will enjoy a good story. A story written well in style will catch and retain the attention of the reader. Though it is generally said that news reports have a life span of only 24 hours, readers will remember such stories for a long time.

A good news report should have the following qualities:

- a) Clarity :** A report is read by many people in society. It should be in simple language and written with clarity .It should not be ambiguous. It should satisfy the reader's inquisitiveness. Facts that are not clear to the readers should be avoided. It is said that when the reporter when is in doubt, he should leave it out.
- b) Focus :** A report should focus on the main theme of the subject. What the reader expects is information and substance.
- c) Objectivity:** The report must be objective. The writer should never take sides. Their personal bias should not be reflected in the story. If there are two sides to a story, both should be given adequate coverage.

In other words, the report should be balanced.

- d) Credibility:** A report should be credible. Before writing, the reporter should crosscheck the facts and figures. Mistakes can creep in when work is done in haste. It is always better to revise the copy before sending to the editor.

If the story can be improved, it should be rewritten.



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7.6 BREAKING NEWS, EXCLUSIVES OR SCOOPS

These are terms that are commonly used in the media world. By breaking news, we mean a report of any sudden news development which was not known so far and which is of utmost importance to a large section of society. Nowadays, breaking news is a familiar term for those watching television channels.

Exclusives or scoops are news reports which are covered by only one reporter. Nobody else gets it. It is considered to be a great journalistic achievement, a 'score' of a reporter.

7.7 QUALITIES OF A GOOD REPORTER

There are 20 qualities required for the making of a good reporter. It does not mean that all reporters possess these qualities. It varies from person to person. But it is better if a journalist cultivates it because it pays him in the long run. The following are the qualities -

News sense, clarity, objectivity, accuracy, alertness, inquisitiveness, time consciousness, patience, imagination, farsightedness, self-control, integrity, sincerity, fearlessness, tactfulness, mobility, enthusiasm, readiness to face challenges, reading habit.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.3

1. Mention five qualities required for a good reporter.
2. What is a scoop? Give two examples.

7.8 INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING AND INTERPRETATIVE REPORTING

Investigative reporting means reporting a matter, often a scandal or controversy, in all its details. It is in-depth reporting. For this, a reporter or a team of reporters selects a particular subject and goes deep into it. In the recent past some such stories investigated by the media are the Bofors arms deal, security scam and urea import scam.



Activity 7.1

Find out any one investigative story that was reported recently.

Investigative reporting sometimes becomes a sting operation. A sting operation is one in which a reporter adopts all available methods and tactics to collect the information. Sometimes they even trap people for that. One such sting operation that created controversy was done by Tehelka.



Activity 7.2

Find out about a sting operation that took place recently.



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Interpretative reporting, as the name suggests, is interpretative in nature. These are analysis of news developments. It is mostly done by senior journalists with years of experience in reporting a particular field. Most common interpretative reporting is on political developments. Correspondents covering political parties do this whenever a major development takes place in that party.

7.9 EDITORS

You have learnt about reporters and reporting. Now let us learn about editors. Every newspaper will have a set of editors, like reporters. All editors are not of the same category. Their position and role differ according to the work they do.

The editor is a person who edits. An editor supervises the reporters and improves his reports for publication. An editor also plans about what to report, how to cover and the relative importance to be given to each story.

In a newspaper, the top post is that of a Chief Editor. The Chief Editor or Editor heads all departments in a newspaper and is in charge of the overall supervision. Next to this post, there are managing editors. For assisting him, there are assistant managing editors or deputy managing editors.

Then there are news editors. They are directly in charge of the news desks. The desk is the place where reports are edited and sent for printing. Under the news editors are chief sub editors or desk chiefs. Once the news editor selects the reports to be published, the desk chief gives that to sub editors under him to polish, correct, edit, put a headline, select the type phase and add pictures or graphs if required. This is the main process of editing.

Modern newspapers have editors for every section. The sports editor looks after sports news. The feature editor looks after the features section. Picture editors are in charge of photographers. Like that business editors look after business news. Then there are city editors who are in charge of the local area. In big cities they are called metro editors.

7.10 EDITING A COPY

In a newspaper office, reporters are the ones who file stories. They may be given different assignments. These may be on politics, economics, parliament, the stock exchange, sports, courts or markets.

The reporter's job is to write the story as quickly as possible with all the facts and figures. In their hurry, they may not be in a position to polish the language. So the first job of a sub editor is to see that the report is in good language and there are no mistakes. There can be spelling mistakes, mistakes in sentence construction, grammar and factual mistakes. If the sub editor finds a portion of the report ambiguous or incorrect or doubtful he has to cross check it with the reporter.



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Fig. 7.9(a): Story unedited



Fig.7.9(b): Story edited

The next job of the sub editor is to value add the report. If some background material has to be added, he has to collect it from the library and improve the



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story. For example, if a report is filed on a train accident killing ten people, the sub editor can improve the story by collecting information about other major train accidents that happened recently. Similarly if a report is filed on the spread of dengue fever in the city, the sub editor should take a backgrounder about the earlier outbreaks of such contagious diseases and the measures taken to check these.

The sub editor then has to find a good heading for the story. The heading should be sharp, attractive, crisp and convey the spirit of the story. The heading should compel the reader to stop and read the whole story. While writing the heading, a sub editor should know the space available for the story, whether it is one column, two columns or three etc. The heading should fit within that column.

You must have noticed from this that the headings are not of uniform type. The type, or font, of the letters in each heading differs according to the length and width of the column. A sub editor should also know about the font sizes available. Each paper has its fonts and types.

While writing the heading, it should fit into the mood of the story. A sarcastic heading for a hard story will look odd. Similarly a hardline heading will spoil the spirit of a humorous piece. The heading should also be suggestive. It should never be a full sentence.

The sub editor now has to see if there is a possibility for including photographs along with the news item. Pictures or graphs can improve the visual quality of a report. For example, if there is a report about the names of probable ministers in an impending cabinet reshuffle, readers would be expecting their pictures also along with the report. So the sub editor should get their pictures from the photo library.

Similarly, if the report is about the change in income tax rates, the sub editor should think of a graph to go along with that.

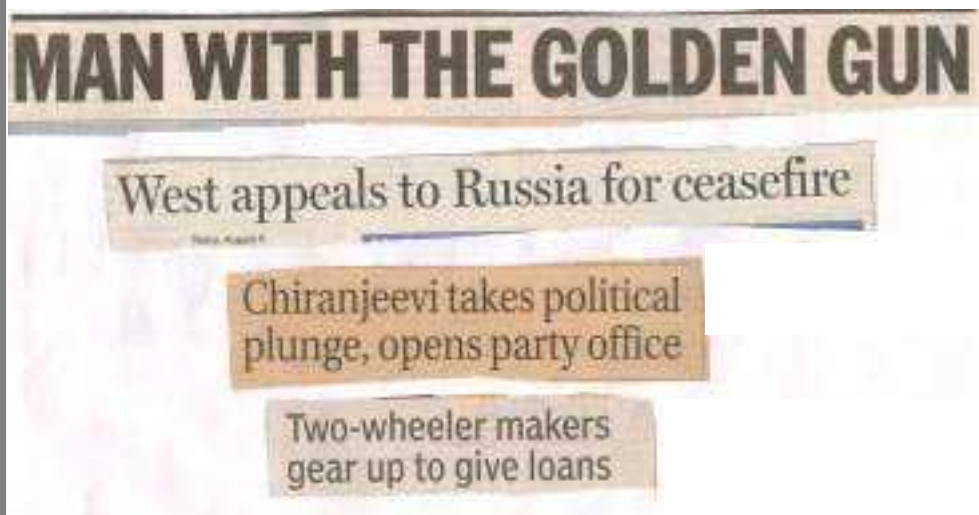


Fig. 7.10: Headings



Condensation is a task that the sub editor has to do. Reporters generally file lengthy stories. Only the sub editor will be able to know about the availability of space in the newspaper. If the full story written by a correspondent will not squeeze into the space available, it is the job of the sub editor to condense it by rewriting or editing. If one word can substitute for a number of words that definitely should be done.

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Fig. 7.11: Graphs

Another important decision an editor has to take is about giving a byline or credit to the story. Stories come from news agencies like Press Trust of India, United News of India, PTI Bhasha, Univartha etc. Normally bylines are not given for such stories. But if a reporter files an exclusive story then it should appear with his byline or name so that he gets individual credit for the story. The decision of giving a byline to a reporter for a particular story is taken by the news editor. But a sub editor who edits the story can always suggest to the news editor about giving that story a byline.

7.11 TOOLS OF A SUB EDITOR

What is Petrology? Do you know the meaning of the word ? If you are a sub editor and editing a report, what will you do if you come across this word? If you do not know the word, can you expect the reader to know it? You have to

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refer to a dictionary to find out the meaning. You will find that Petrology is the study of rocks.

Similarly, do you know what Scotophobia means? Again you have to refer to a dictionary. The word means 'fear of the dark'.

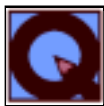
A good dictionary is the first tool that a sub editor should keep by his side. While subbing or editing a story, you have to refer to it whenever required. All newspaper offices are equipped with different types of dictionaries.



Fig. 7.12: Dictionaries

Another tool a sub editor needs is reference books. When stories are edited, you need to refer on various issues. For eg. a report is filed about a new President being elected in a neighbouring country. Along with the news, we have to give a picture and some details about the person. So the sub editor has to look up some reference book and add those details.

A sub editor should know where to get the information he wants. Some of these may be available from the reference section of the library. For other details, one has to surf the Internet. Nowadays websites provide a lot of information.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.4**

1. You are reporting a cabinet reshuffle. What additional information do you require to better your stories.
2. Mention three rules of good editing.
3. What are the tools required by a sub editor?



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7.12 EDITING ON COMPUTER

Newspaper production is one area where technological revolution has made sweeping changes. It is interesting to note that though the newspaper is printed on paper, most newspaper offices are becoming paperless places. Computers have replaced paper. Filing of stories, editing and photo editing are all done on a computer.

So it goes without saying that a reporter or editor in the present time should be familiar with the computer. Knowledge of computers is a basic requirement for a newspaper job. Nowadays cartoonists also prefer to draw on the computer. Graphs and charts can be created on a computer easily. Photographers use laptops for editing and filing photos.

Editing on the computer has its advantages. Words and sentences can be corrected on the screen. There are a wide range of type faces available. Pages can be set on the computer. The pages so set can directly go to the press. Regional languages have also developed their own keyboards.

7.13 LAYOUT OF PAGES

How many newspapers are published in your place of living? Have you ever thought of how they are produced? Do all of them look the same? If they are different, how is that different look made possible? Newspaper layout makes it possible.

Each newspaper has a different layout though all have eight columns in each page. Types or fonts used by newspapers also differ from paper to paper. Every sub editor has to learn the type faces available in the paper and the layout pattern adopted.

Preparing the page of the newspaper is called page making. Earlier sub editors used to do it on dummy pages. Now a days they are doing it on the computer screen. Page layout is an art. Each page is different in a paper. At the same time there is a continuity also.



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(a) Front page



(b) Editorial page



(c) Sports page

Fig. 7.13: Page Layout

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Photography is an integral part of the media. Whether a newspaper or news weekly or news channel or a news portal, photography is essential to give it the visual impact, effect and authenticity. All newspapers have photographers working in different places. They regularly file pictures. But if you take a newspaper from your city, you will find that there are pictures from other countries also published. These are pictures filed by photo agencies. Like news agencies, there are photo agencies in all major cities.

It is said that a good picture is worth a thousand words. It shows the importance of pictures in a newspaper. Sometimes one picture is enough to explain the mood of a situation or an event.

Look at the following pictures. They give the impression about the situation without even a description.

**Fig. 7.14(a)****Fig. 7.14(b)**



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When you see a photo in the newspaper you look for what is written under it. This writing under a photo is called the catchword or caption. When photographers file photos, it is the job of the sub editor to write the appropriate caption. A good caption can improve the impact of the picture.

See the captions in the following pictures.



Fig. 7.5(a)



Fig. 7.5(b)



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Write captions for the following pictures.



Fig. 7.6(a)



Fig. 7.6(b)

Picture editing also involves placing the picture in the correct position in the page. It is part of the page layout. Usually in the front page, only very important news pictures will find a place. Like in the case of news reports, pictures can also be classified into various categories, like, news pictures, human interest pictures, sports pictures etc. Most papers have picture editors who select the pictures to be published. But it is the news editor who finally decides on the number of pictures to be carried in each page.



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7.14 ETHICS OF REPORTING

Press freedom is a word that is commonly used. By this, we mean the right to publish news without any restriction or control. But this does not mean that anything about anybody can be published. There are certain rules of conduct or principles of morality which we have to follow while reporting. The editor should check and verify that the news which he publishes is correct, accurate, and factual. He should not publish anything that is misleading, inaccurate, defamatory, vulgar or obscene. Media should not intervene into the privacy of individuals. Also media should not report anything that harms national interest.

The government of India has passed from time to time several Acts connected with the press and press freedom. The Press and Registration of Books Act 1867 is the oldest among them. According to this Act, every newspaper or magazine printed in India shall print the name of the printer and publisher and the place of printing in the publication.

If a report published in the paper defames the reputation of a person, that individual can file a defamation case in the court of law. The editor, printer or publisher are liable to be punished either individually or jointly.

**7.15 WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

—→ Reporting

- gathering news from various sources
- basic facts about Reporting
- qualities of a good Reporter
- investigative and interpretative reporting
- ethics of reporting

—→ Editing

- types of editors
- editing a copy
- editing on a computer
- tools of sub-editor
- editing of pictures
- layout of pages

—→ News story

- categories of news
- breaking news,
- exclusives or scoops
- qualities of a good news story

**7.16 TERMINAL EXERCISES**

1. Explain the importance of reporting and editing in a news story.
2. Describe in detail the basic facts to be taken into account while reporting. What are the qualities of a good news story?
3. Give an account of qualities of a good reporter.
4. What is editing? Explain the role of editors in a newspaper office.
5. Prepare a front page of a newspaper with news and photographs.

**7.17 ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS**

- 7.1** 1. By reporting, we mean collection or gathering of facts about current events or background material required for a news story or feature. Reporters do it through interviews, investigations and observation. Editing is a process by which a report is read, corrected, modified, value-added, polished, improved and made better for publication.
2. i) listening ii) covering events iii) press conferences iv) reports and statements v) parliament and assemblies
- 7.2** 1. Select from any newspaper.
2. Select from recent newspaper reports
- 7.3** 1. News sense, clarity, objectivity, accuracy and alertness.
2. A scoop or exclusive is a news report which one reporter reports and which is not reported by anybody else. It is considered to be a great journalistic achievement, a score of a reporter over others. Examples to be taken from recent newspaper reports.
- 7.4** 1. In a Cabinet reshuffle main interest will be on new ministers inducted into the Cabinet. If any minister is dropped it is also news. Background of new ministers, their photographs and any other sidelights will make the report more comprehensive. Portfolios of Ministers is another important aspect to be covered.
2. edit the copy and improve the language, correct mistakes and give a good and attractive heading .
3. Dictionaries, reference books, internet accessibility and library.

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