**Chapter One: Basics of Television News**

**What is Television News?**

News is many different things to different people; however, there are some traditional news criteria that should be kept in mind when deciding what to cover and how. The news criteria include:

* Stories that are interesting (know your viewers)
* Stories that have an impact
* Stories that inform
* Stories that are unusual
* Stories about something new
* Stories about conflict
* Stories with strong characters

**Questions for news value consideration are**:

* Why is it important?
* What’s going to happen next?
* What is the point?

**Steps of producing TV news**

When covering a story there are several steps you’ll have to go through before the story finally makes it to air:

* Researching means all the preparation work that precedes going into the field to record or shoot material for broadcast.
* Fact checking is making sure everything to be reported on the air is correct.
* Accuracy is getting it right.
* Balance is making sure that the other side/s of a story gets its/their say.

**Phases in preparation of a TV programme**

* • Pre-production phase
* • Production phase
* • Post-production phase
* The first stage involves the “library work” i.e. research and script writing.
* The second stage involves the “leg work” i.e. field and studio work.
* The third stage involves the “laboratory work” i.e. editing and mixing.

**Definition of Television Production** Television production is regarded as a carefully balanced compromise between artistic aspirations and hard practicalities. There are certain things that seem to be not too important, but without them, production would be marred. These are artistic aspects of the programme. For example, the way your present your ideas, the camera, arrange lighting and sound will give the subject a certain amount of genuineness. Production could be primarily a matter of organisation, this involves bringing together the right elements, such as, the script, performers, setting, that is equipment and the production crew, “and using cameras and microphones to display the performance through carefully selected shots” (Millerson, 1993:12). Mencher (1985:44), in Ciboh and Iyorkyaa (2004:18) defines news as a report that presents a contemporary need of reality with regard to specific issues, events or process. Other contemporary definitions of news range from whatever interests the listener to a timely account of a current idea, or problem that interests people.

Iyorkyaa (2000) says is the recounting of factual information about events, situations and ideas – including opinions and interpretations – calculated to help people individually to cope with themselves and their environment. Tuggle et al (2001:2) say that, in broadcast reporting, we do not use the inverted pyramid style. Television and radio news reporting is done in such a way that the viewer or listener would notice something was missing if we “trimmed from the bottom” because stories are not built in descending order of the facts. Also, the end of longer broadcast news stories should contain either a summary statement or should leave the viewer/listener with something to think about

**Characteristics of Television news**

The major difference between radio and TV news is, of course, pictures. When you write for television, pictures are always crucial to a story. In radio, you must create pictures in your mind—as did Edward R. Murrow and other great broadcasters who used the medium effectively—and then find the words to paint those pictures for your audience. In television, you can show the actual pictures.

**Combining Words and Pictures**

The battle over which are more important in television news—the words or the pictures—is endless. There is no doubt that words are vital and that some broadcast writers use them more effectively than others. The late Charles Kuralt is an example of a writer whose words rival the pictures for prominence in a story. But even Kuralt would have been hard pressed to tell his stories without pictures. His talent was in his ability to strengthen the pictures with words. *Great* pictures and *great* words make great television news.

The beauty of good pictures is that they do not need a lot of words—just some good ones. The challenge for TV writers is to avoid clashes with the video. Do not tell viewers what they are seeing. Instead, support the video by saying what the video does not or cannot reveal. Fill in the blanks, but do not overpower the video. Give your viewers time to savor the pictures. Such advice assumes that you have good pictures to work with. If you don’t, then the words do become crucial because they are needed to prop up the video. But because TV news is not about using poor video, stories with bad pictures are likely to be dropped for more appealing ones unless the messages they convey are too vital to be eliminated completely. If the pictures are poor, however, you can be sure you’ll be asked to tell the story quickly. A common criticism of television news is that it relies on the pictures too much, but right or wrong the formula is not likely to change: poor pictures, short stories; good pictures, long stories.

**Sound Bites**

As in radio, sound bites, the words of newsmakers, are key to telling a good TV news story. An advantage for TV writers is that TV sound bites feature the faces of the newsmakers as well as their voices. Good TV news writers weave their copy between and around the sound bites, much in the way that radio writers create wraparounds. This combination, called a *package,* is the best way to tell a news story on television.

**Visual Storytelling**

*“If your lens doesn’t need cleaning at the end of a shoot, you didn’t get close enough.”*

*- Rich Murphy, photojournalist*

Television is not simply radio with pictures. Indeed, pictures are the most important part of our television news stories simply because people will remember what they see before they remember what they hear, so “show, don’t tell”. Aim to have pictures that are memorable for the pictures are your visual proof. Visual storytelling is really an art, but it is an art that we can learn and practice. But before you begin to shoot you need to know what your objective is, what is the focus of your story? What is the editorial focus and what is the visual focus. By determining this you can then decide what pictures you’ll need to capture even before going out into the field. Also, while it may seem obvious, you need to know what equipment is available, how to use it, and feel comfortable with it or you won’t be able to use it effectively or with confidence. This is not something you can learn in the field!

**Who are Television news sources?**

Most national and international news comes into a newsroom from the Associated Press. Most local news comes from a combination of sources and activities, including the police and fire departments, the courts and various other municipal institutions, and community and business organizations. Local news also is generated by the routine follow-up of the leads and tips that pour into the assignment desk on a continuing basis from beat reporters, tipsters, and even non-news personnel who work for the station.

**The Wires**

The term *wires* is still used to describe the services offered by newsgathering organizations such as the Associated Press, United Press International, and Reuters, a British firm. United Press, which was once a formidable competitor to AP, is only a shadow of its former self, giving AP a virtual lock on this news delivery system. The word *wires* refers to the telegraph cables that were originally used to transmit the news to newspaper clients. Today, the wires feed news to some 5,000 radio and TV customers, as well as newspapers. The news is distributed not by wires but via satellite to computers.

The old clattering typewriter-type machines that were in every newsroom have been converted to systems that allow the news to be fed directly into computers in the newsrooms and at the anchor desks. Writers, producers, and anchors can print out stories that interest them, and if they wish, the anchors can read the material live from the video screens at their desks.

Most small-market radio stations use the AP broadcast wire that transmits hourly summaries of the news. The broadcast wire is designed for those stations with little or no news operation. The broadcast wire is popularly referred to as the “rip-and-read” wire because that is the way these summaries are most often used at stations lacking staff to rewrite news copy. The stories are designed to be read without any rewriting. Some radio and TV stations, usually in large markets, also subscribe to an AP newspaper wire, called the *A Wire,* which provides considerably more detail about national and international news than the broadcast wire because A Wire stories are written primarily with newspapers in mind.

**Television Satellite Feeds**

Television stations also receive a steady stream of sound bites and reports via closed-circuit feeds, usually referred to as *newsfeeds,* by the networks and various independent producers. Although satellite technology has changed the way newsfeeds are transmitted, the networks have been feeding local stations with additional news for years. Other companies offer custom-made newscasts throughout the day.

**The Internet**

Radio and TV stations rely heavily on the Internet for news and research; however, anything taken from the Internet must be used with caution and attribution because a lot of the information is not reliable.

**Newspapers**

Many broadcast news managers do not like to admit it, but they often rely on newspapers as a source of news. Because they have much larger news staffs and more room for news, newspapers often have stories that broadcast newsrooms miss or do not bother to cover. Some stations rely on newspapers more than others. Stations with enough reporters to do a good job covering the local scene are less dependent on newspapers than are stations with small news staffs. Some stations are constantly playing “catch-up” because they cannot compete with the newspaper’s beat system.

**Chapter Two**

**Components in television news package**

**Script**

Scripts are **guide** document in virtually all programme production particularly for the broadcast media. Scripts to spell out all the requirements and indicate what every performer and direct how each performer should relate to the other throughout the programme. It is the scripts that determine the type of programme to be produced. Some are fully scripted. These type do not permit the performers to add anything to what is placed before them while semi scripted ones do permit performers to add their thought, ideas and views, thus allowing them to contribute their own creativity along the suggested programme approach.

**The Split Page**

Preparing a TV script is somewhat more complicated than preparing a radio script. A TV script is **divided into two vertical sections** and is known as a **split page.** All technical instructions and identification of video and graphics appear in the **left** portion of the split page, while the script to be read by the anchor or reporter appears in the **right** column along with sound bite out cues and times. The split page is divided vertically so that about 60 percent of the page is in the right column and about 40 percent is in the left. If you examine critically some scripts, you will notice that each station has its own way of using the split page. Experienced broadcast journalists adjust easily to the slight variations as they move from station to station.

The right side of the split page is reserved for the copy that will be read by the anchors, the running times (which also appear on the left), and the outcues (final words) of any videotape that has sound. The anchors—and this is important to remember—will be able to see only the right side of the script on their teleprompters. It is also important that you write only in the column on the right side. If you write outside the column, the words will not appear on the teleprompter screens.

***Here is the split-page script used for the train wreck story***

**TRAIN WRECK 3/15 6pm tw SMITH**

**O/C Smith Box ADDA**

A Conrail freight train today left the tracks near Centerville, Kansas, causing some major problems for passenger service trains that also use the tracks.

**V/O SIL (TRT: 40sec.) V/O**

Railroad officials say the locomotive and eight of the train’s 14 cars were derailed. They blamed a broken rail. Remarkably, there were only two injuries—to the engineer and his assistant—and they were not serious.

The train was on its way to southern California with a load of steel and lumber when the accident took place shortly before midnight. The wreckage was scattered over a wide area. Within hours a derrick was sent to the scene to help clean up the mess. Officials say the job will take days.

Freezing temperatures—dipping

into the teens—will make the cleanup difficult and unpleasant.

**Smith O/C Tag O/C**

Railroad officials say that while the wreckage is being removed and repairs made to the tracks, Conrail passenger trains will be detoured. This probably will cause delays for at least 48 hours.

**Voice-overs**

Another impertinent issue to TV news writers is the voice-over (V/O), copy that the anchor reads while video or other visuals are shown. The video can either be silent or have a soundtrack that is kept low for natural effect, a technique referred to as *sound under* or *natural sound*. To write voice-over copy intelligently, you need to look at the video and take notes. When viewing the video, use a stopwatch to time each scene. The cameraperson sometimes shoots a series of short shots that may require little editing, but individual shots are often too long to use without editing.

**Slugs**

Every page of the news script must be identified. These identifications are called slugs and are placed in the upper left-hand corner of the page. The slug includes a one- or two-word description of the story, such as Forest Fire, Newspaper Strike, or Missing Boy. The slug also includes the date, the time of the newscast, and the writer’s initials.

Here’s an example:

Kids’ Band

4/25/10

6 p.m.

FB

Slugs are important because they allow the writer, producers, anchors, director, and a variety of other people involved in putting a newscast together to locate a particular story in the script quickly. This can be vital when, for example, the position of the story in the script must be changed or the story must be dropped just as the newscast begins or when it is already on the air.

**Sound on Tape**

Those writing news for TV must also learn to write voice-over scripts that include sound on tape (SOT). Because the voices and pictures of newsmakers are a vital part of TV news, a great deal of the sound on tape is provided in the middle of reporter packages and is of no real concern to the newswriter. But sound is often worked into the anchor’s script without the help of the reporter, and that is the newswriter’s function. Let’s go back to the train wreck story and suppose that there is some sound on tape of one of the workers trying to keep warm around the trashcan fire. The writer decides to add that sound on tape to the script at the end of the voice-over before the anchor comes back on camera. A sound bite used at the end of a voice-over is abbreviated VO-SOT or V-SOT. The script would look like this:

SOT :15 TRACK UP

FONT: Mark Florman

OUTCUE “. . . get any railroad worker warmer.”

Time :15

**O/C Smith O/C**

Railroad officials say that while the wreckage is being removed and repairs made to the tracks, Conrail passenger trains will be detoured. This probably will cause delays for at least 48 hours.

The sound-on-tape symbol and the time appear in the left-hand column to indicate that sound on tape will be used at this point in the script. The director now knows that when the anchor reads the last words of the voice-over, “. . . difficult and unpleasant,” it is time to bring in the sound on tape. The terms “Track Up” and “Time 15” also appear in the right-hand column along with the outcue, the final words of the sound bite. This lets the anchor know that a 15-second sound bite comes up before he returns on camera to read the last sentence in the story. The abbreviation *FONT* in the left column means that the name and identification of the railroad worker is to be superimposed over the lower portion of the screen while the railroad worker is speaking. The director will signal the font operator to punch up the information approximately three seconds into the sound bite. After the sound bite instructions, the symbol O/C is written on both sides of the script to indicate that the anchor returns on camera to wrap up or “tag” the story or to begin a new story.

**Video Instructions**

The left side of the script is set aside for the slug and for video and audio instructions and tape times for the director. Because of the limited space on the left side of the script, abbreviations are used for the various technical instructions. Here are some common ones:

**1. O/C, “on camera,”** tells the director that at this point in the script the anchor will be on camera.

**2. V/O, “voiceover,”** means the anchor is reading copy while the audience is seeing something else, such as silent videotape or graphics.

**3. SIL indicates “silent”** videotape and is used in combination with the V/O symbol.

**4. SOT** lets the director know that there is **“sound on tape.”** It could be a sound bite with a newsmaker or a report from the field that was taped earlier.

**5. ENG,** “**electronic news gathering,”** tells the director that the video is on a videocassette.

**6. FONT**, an abbreviation for the manufacturer Video font, indicates that **names, titles, and other** information are superimposed over videotape or graphics to identify newsmakers, locations, and various other pictures appearing on TV screens. Many stations use the term *super* or the abbreviation **VG (video graphic)** instead of FONT.

**7. SL, ESS, or ADDA** indicate that pictures or graphics of some sort will be shown next to the anchor. SL stands for “slide”; ESS refers to Electronic Still Storage, an electronic graphics and video computer system; ADDA is the name of a computer system that also provides electronic storage. If the word ***box***appears next to any of these abbreviations, the graphic will be enclosed

in a box next to the anchor rather than fill the entire screen. Other technical abbreviations are used by writers to help the director. You will learn them once you start working with video on a regular basis.

**A Team Effort**

As you can see, writing television news is more complicated than writing radio news. Although one individual writes the television story and may even edit the videotape used in the story, the final product involves other people in the newsroom. In radio, writers usually pick the stories they wish to tell their audience. In television, those who write the stories are told what to write and how long the stories should be. In radio, one person may do it all—record interviews on the phone, cover a news conference, and include in the newscast some of the tape he or she has edited. There are no one-person newsrooms in television, although at small stations you may be expected to play more than one role. As in radio, television affords opportunities to learn how to do several different jobs. Writers often go on to other positions as reporters, anchors, and producers. Some move over to the assignment desk

**Headlines and Teases**

Depending on the size of the news operation, headlines and teases usually are turned out by the writer, the editor, or a producer. As always, the major difference between headlines for television and those for radio is that headlines and teases on television are normally supported with pictures. Some network newsrooms forgo the traditional headline approach, preferring to have the anchors talk briefly about the top story before going to a reporter for details. But local news almost always leads the newscast with headlines, which are most effective when used with flashes of video. Here’s a sample of how one local newsroom scripts headlines:

HOWARD (DEE) (HOWARD)

 Coming up on Action News at Six . . .

V/O #5 (liquor store)

Police search for two men who killed a liquor store owner during a holdup.

RUNS :04

WIPE TO V/0 #3 (DEE)

(Mayor shaking hands)

Mayor Thompson honors a citizen who rescued a child from a burning building.

RUNS :04

WIPE TO V/O #2 (HOWARD)

(Unemployment office)

And unemployment in Center City reaches a new high.

RUNS :03

O/C Howard (Gail) Good evening, I’m Howard Pass.

(DEE)

And I’m Dee Danaher. Those are some of the stories we’re covering on tonight’s Action News.

In the left column, *HOWARD* indicates that one anchor reads the opening line of the newscast and the first headline, while *(DEE)*—note the parentheses—indicates that the other anchor is also on camera. Both anchors quickly disappear from the screen, but Howard is heard reading the first headline over video showing the scene of the liquor store holdup. The video runs about four seconds. After the first headline, the video wipes to a shot of Mayor Thompson shaking hands with a hero while Dee reads that headline.

The second voice-over also runs four seconds. The video wipes a third time to a three second shot of workers standing on line at an unemployment office. Howard reads that headline, as indicated, over the video. Then both anchors return on camera as Howard says “good evening” and identifies himself. Dee does the same and reminds the audience that the stories just teased would be covered in the upcoming newscast. The numbers next to the voice-over symbols indicate which playback machines are used in the control room, information that is vital to the director. If the director or his or her assistant calls for the wrong machine, the wrong video would appear, and the newscast would get off to a confusing start. Some stations give numbers to the tapes instead of the machines. In that case, the tape numbers would be placed on the scripts so that the director could call for the proper one. Later in the newscast—before the commercials—teases are used in an effort to hold the audience. The same voice-over technique used in headlines is used for teases. Many producers also include fonts over the video to give it extra punch. For example, these words might appear at the bottom of the appropriate video:

Police hunt killer . . .

Hero honored . . .

Unemployment climbs . . .

The point of such teases is to hook viewers, to keep their interest in the news during the commercial. Teasing three stories increases the chance that your audience will be interested in at least one of the upcoming stories.

**Leads**

The lead is the most important part of a news story because it sets the tone for all that follows. The lead must grab or “hook” the audience’s attention in as few words as possible. The hook can be an exciting or dramatic sentence, a clever phrase, an intriguing fact, or a provocative quote.

**The “Five W’s and H Rule”**

Unless the story is a feature, the lead must include an element of news. Itmust begin to address the traditional journalistic concept of discovering information.To guarantee that all of the important news elements are reportedin a story, journalists have devised a rule that requires newswriters to answer six basic questions: who, what, where, when, why, and how. This rule is referred to as the “five W’s and H rule.” At one time, most newspaper editors expected every lead to answer all of these questions. But few newspaper editors still require this, and broadcastersnever follow the rule. However, at least one or more of the questionsmust be answered in the lead of the story for it to be news. By the end of thestory, most—if not all—of the questions should be answered.An opening sentence that contains no news is referred to as a non-newslead, and such leads are unacceptable in a news story. Here’s an examplefrom the Gulf War: The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell has met withreporters. This lead could become news by answering some of the journalistic questions.Why did the chairman meet with reporters? What did he tell them? Forexample:

*“The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, told reporters this morning that the United States would probably continue to keep troops in Iraq for a number of months*.”

This revised lead does not deal with all five W’s and the H, but it is a start. The who is the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The what is the issue of maintaining troops in Iraq. The where is Iraq. The when is for a number of months. Still unanswered are the why and the how. These questions would be answered in the balance of the story—if the answers are available. This revised lead is an example of a hard lead. Such leads address the most important aspect of a story immediately. There are a variety of ways to lead your story, and all of them will be examined in the following sections. The decision about which kind of lead to use depends on a number of factors; the most important is the nature of the story. Is it a feature or breaking news? Is the story sad or upbeat? Is it about people or an event? Is the story about politics, a war, a medical development, or the kidnapping of a child? Is the story brand new or a continuing one? The lead is like the foundation of a house. How the foundation is built determines how the rest of the house will look. The lead sentence determines how the rest of the story should be constructed.

**Writing News for Television**

The hardest part of writing broadcast copy is getting started. There are times when you will have difficulty moving your fingers. Your brain will seem dead. You may feel hypnotized by the white paper in your typewriter or the glow from your computer screen. Break the spell! Type the first thing that comes into your mind. Don’t worry whether it is good, just write. Get started. It will get easier. You may find that the first sentence you write works as an opening for your story, or you may need to write a few sentences before you come up with one that you like. This chapter focuses on writing an effective opening sentence, or lead, for a news story.

Writing for television programmes in blending of pictures with sound to produce a communication experience exhibited on the screen. It uses sound to explain the visuals presented on the screen. It addresses the emotion and the intellect, in a remarkable way (Owuamalam, 2007:238). As a dynamic medium, television uses the movement of images in a particular pattern to give expression to the thought and feeling in an interesting, exciting and appealing manner. Those who conceive ideas for writing for television should, therefore, bear in mind at the start that what they are going to write must be accompanied with pictures, as words alone would not be sufficient to deliver the message intended for the targeted audience.

The pictures must blend with the words to produce precisely what they intend the viewer to see and hear. For the picture and the words used complement each other to realise the objective of the programme. If, for instance, it were announced that a building has collapsed and killed a number of persons in any of the towns in Ethiopia viewers would expect to be shown the collapsed building, with commentary by the reporter. They would be frustrated if the station fails show the people of the building or the people affected.

In writing for television, since words go along with **pictures**, **words** have to be carefully selected, arranged and presented in such a way that they make an imprint on the minds of the station’s audience.

There are many verities of newscasts as there are news organizations. Virtually all newscasts contain commercial breaks, sports and weather forecast, which a writer should not forget to include while writing news. The following are some **important principles** of writing news for Television;

**Principles of TV news writing**

**New Hole:** Before the writer fills his newscast, he must determine how much time is at his disposal. The total amount of time required covers commercial breaks, sports and weather. This is called the “Skeleton time” or “Killer time” and when this time is subtracted from the total available time, what is left is known as the “News Hole”. Even the remaining time is subject to adjustment depending on the length of the commercial breaks. Tuggle, Carr and Huffman (2001:141) say that time left can also expand and contract depending on amount of time devoted to sport and weather. For this reason, news writers and producers frequently ask sports and weathercasters to donate time. In writing news, the writer should use simple everyday words, short sentences; however they must be concise and precise to the point. He or she should not use figures for numbers that are more than 10. The television news writer does not have an easy task. He or she has to produce scripts within a short time and they must not be more than the time allotted to the news.

**Let the Pictures Describe**

It is very irritating to hear extravagant detail description of news that can clearly be seen by viewers. He or she should identify people and explain action, let the people and action speak for themselves.

 **Use of Tenses**

In most cases the writer should use present tense as it carries an air of immediacy and it sounds simple. Past tense can be used when the action is actually in the past for it also has the air that goes with completed action.

**Priority**

The inverted pyramid system of News writing accepted by the print media is not suitable for television News casting. This is not to say that the lead story should not be important. If the lead story is not important, viewers are likely to switch to another station and may not come back to your station.

**Flow**

Tuggle et al (2001:143) say good writers do group their stories somewhat according to theme and then group the theme in logical order, taking News worthiness into account. After placing the most important story for the lead, it does not necessarily follow that the second story must be the next important. The writer should have these stories in sequence.

**Pacing**

The story should not be crammed into the top of the news block then running the less important at the end of the block. This is the most terrible thing a writer would do. And each idea in the news forms a paragraph on its own. All under no circumstances should words by hyphenated on two lines. If a word cannot be written on a line and must be cut or carried over to the other line leave the space blank and write the word in full on the next line. Starting words and carrying or finishing them on another line makes it difficult to read smoothly.

**Chapter Three**

**Script Writing and Presentation Techniques**

**Qualities of a Good Script Writer**

The scriptwriter should appear original in his ideas and should be interesting so as to attract audience attention when finally produced. The script should indicate the scope and limitation so that the producer is in no doubt in planning for the human and material resources that would be employed for the production. The plot and in fact the characterization should be in such a manner as to be able to direct the producer on the requirements for the production.

If the script is meant to educate, inform or entertain the station’s audience, it should do so very well. The script should be devoid of ambiguity. Sub-themes should match with the main theme and show clarity of thought and provide a vivid picture of the main theme to enhance a better appreciation of the actins found in the creative work. He or she should be able to handle the plot in an interesting and entertaining manner. Owuamalam (2007:91) states that, plots as the scheme of action ought to be logically presented, in order to enable the audience to understand the lesson derivable from the script as presented. The presentation of characters in a sequential order of relevance tends to help the progression of the work. Both actions should be presented in orderly and interesting manner so as to make it suiting to the station’s audience. The language used should be understood both by performers and the audience and the scriptwriter must identify the audience he or she is writing for, that he or she must know their needs and desires because audience tend to appreciate more a production that satisfies their needs and desires because audience tend to appreciate more a production that satisfies their needs and desires. And above all, the script writer should give a general consideration to the audience perspective by drawing out of his or her plot that is relevant to the society that the production is meant to appeal to. He or she not forgets that any production, which assists in bringing about change in societal attitude towards taking remedial action to its advantage, tends to be best appreciated.

**A good script has following components:**

**Purpose** to justify its viewer-ship

**Simplicity** to make it look true

**Familiarity** to be directly communicable

**Production Script** Perhaps it is because scripts are the programme production pears that they appear to be very important document in broadcast programme production. The production scripts usually contain the production effects to be used during performance. The scripts also determine the type of language to be used by the artistes. A production script is realised after the production meeting comprising the various heads of units who come together to discuss the programme, its content and other necessary requirements including the budget. It is also at this stage that the master script is produced.

**Master Script** This is the document, which gives the detail description of the programme idea and comes up with the storyline. It is here that other types of scripts emerge. They include:

• **The Director’s Script**

The script identifies the roles of the programme director, the technical director and cameramen in case of the television. It is also here that the type of costumes, make-ups, the furniture to be used. It also shows the floor manager and what is required of him or her, and from here he or she comes up with the proper floor design and plan for the production.

• **The Technical Script**

The script is a technical one so uses technical language. It could first be a sketch and nothing more provided the technical personnel understand it.

• **Shooting Scripts**

The script is principally concerned with directing and rehearsing on the intended video and audio inputs so that at end a meaningful production is realised.

**The Acting Script**

In a situation where lines are provided for the performers the script clearly indicates the lines of dialogue, what each actor or actress is to say in the order the lines are to be delivered. The script also indicates other acting instructions that would aid performers live the lives of other persons on stage.

**BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PRESENTATION**

Presentation is a careful way of introducing a programme to the intended audience. It gives the audience insight into what they would see or listen to in the programme proper. Owuamalam (2007:149) says presentation provides the audience with the vital information, required to adjust their listening or viewing desire. Presentation gives stations the integrity they enjoy in attracting audience to their programmes in broadcasting. Presentation can be compared to the paint which decorates the building from the outside which attracts the on looker who would want to see the interior of the building. If the programme is introduced skillfully and artistically, the audience would want to watch or listen to the whole programme. By and large presentation is an interior to beckon to the audience to come to a sumptuous meal. It may even capture some audience members who are in the habit of wandering from station to station seeking programme content that would meet their desires.

**Diction**

The ability to pronounce words distinctly and clearly, determines to a large extent, how the audience members understand the information, which is to be shared with the presenter. Stresses must be accurately emphasised at the relevant points in order to state exactly what the presenter means. Clarity of meaning is the essence of good diction (Owuamalam, 2007:151). Being a good presenter takes more than producing beautiful words. It involves the ability to exhibit great skill in presenting issues and ideas clearly in few words so that the audience will understand at a go what the presenter is saying. Whatever is the case, tribal or foreign accents should be avoided in broadcasting. Each language has to be spoken according to its phonetic rules, and nothing more. Anything short of this results to misunderstanding of the intention of the presenter and may become channel noise. The presenter should never attempt to speak in exaggerated manner in order to impress the audience. It should be noted that the aim of presentation is to express a thought or feeling and the presenter should aspire to achieve the aim of presentation rather than constituting himself/herself into a public or audience nuisance.

**Mood and Emotion**

In a broadcast station the responsibility of setting the mood rests on the presenter. The presentation of information and the manner of delivery to the audience is the work of the presenter. If the presenter is cheerful and lively in his/her presentation the audience would go along with him/her. The use of body language such as facial expression certainly adds to the articulation of meaning especially when accompanied by the correct words.

The sounds that come from a presenter often indicate the mood of the presenter as they relate to the meaning and structure of the presentation. Langer (1979) says the various forms of human feelings range from growth and attention, flowing and slowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm or subtle activation to dreaming lapses. It is, therefore, the duty of the presenter to ensure that the mood and emotional feelings of the audience are aroused in conjunction with the objectives of the station’s programmes.

**Eye Contact**

Television presentation is similar to interpersonal communication just like the radio where the presenter appears to be addressing the listener. Who is face to face with him? In the case of television the presenter is separated from the audience it appears as if he is addressing them in a face-to-face situation. In most cases, presenters are seen smiling at their audience. This is to arrest the attention and interest of the audience and make them feel relaxed. The ability of the presenter to make frequent eye contact with the camera lens in television or a mental delivery of aural contact through the choice of words in radio can achieve the desired effect. It radiates confidence in the presenter and provides unconstructive forum for verbal communication (Owuamalam, 2007:153). It is understood that in most cases eye contact gives encouragement to mutual participation in communication. It also encourages quick feedback. Here the source of information is easily confirmed and identified. And if the presenter appears friendly and presentable the audience members are likely going to stay put to consume the programme.

**Competence**

A beginner may not be as competent in the art of presentation as someone who has been on the job for a long time. Competence is acquired through practice and experience of performing the task over and over again. For example, a presenter of law courts programme should be conversant with legal terms to be used in the course of presentation. He should know when to use the term “his lordship” and “his worship”, “to pass that are associated with the judiciary. It is from knowledge that competence is drawn by the presenter who is now in a better position to guide his audience throughout the character of the programme. The presenter should also show signs of competence in the other areas of production. For example, he or she should be able to know the signals given either by the programme director or the floor manager who is the contact person between the director and the artistes in the studio. In fact, he or she should be knowledgeable in the production language and sign of the programme. When he or she acquires knowledge in these and other things that are involved in production then such a presenter is said to be competent in the performance of his or her job.

**Charisma**

Programme presentation in broadcasting is usually combined with special gift which tends to make the presenter acceptable to the audience. The presenter should cultivate an acceptable behavior that makes him loveable any time his voice is heard over the radio or his face is seen on the screen. For it is generally believed that if people are impressed with a personality there is likelihood that such a personality would attract a lot of followership.

**Chapter Four**

**Production mechanisms and personals in TV News production**

**Basic Production Methods**

Before production begins, certain basic things have to be in place. They include lighting, talent or artist, camera and sound. There are several ways in which production can be organised depending on the type of programme and the method to be adopted.

**1. Live production –** Here the programme is not pre–recorded. The performance is carried out live. To present live transmission that is free from mistakes it requires careful organisation, clear-headed direction, and closely coordinated skilled teamwork. Any problems that arise while on air have either to be covered up in some way or simply accepted (Millerson, 1993:90).

**2. Basic Retakes –** At the end of the rehearsal recording is done continuously and if there are errors of any kind, performance is halted and the bad section is retaken. The section may be recorded all over again or taken separately. If this is done it can be inserted afterwards in its proper place.

**3. Rehearse-Record Method –** This method is also called discontinuous recording. Here individual shots are rehearsed then recorded. Then separate corrective retakes are recorded before proceeding to the next sequence. This method is time consuming and there is always insufficient time to remedy problems in the setting, lighting and costume

**TV Production Crew Positions**

Following is a list of crew positions you could encounter in a multi-camera television production. Not all positions will be filled all of the time--smaller productions will not have some of the more specialized job duties or one person will fill several positions. Larger productions will have more specialized positions and assistants or associates to provide, well, assistance. For a detailed description of the job performed by each, see your text.

• Producer: Executive, Associate, Line, etc.

• Director: Associate, Assistant, Floor, Technical

• Writer

• Set Designer

• Makeup/Wardrobe

• Audio Engineer

• Video Engineer

• Videotape Engineer/Operator

• Camera Operator

• Production Assistant

It is important that each person understand and perform his/her job responsibilities with maximum efficiency. Multi-camera television production is team-work, and for the team to operate effectively, it must coordinate and communicate. While the television production process may at times appear to be a confusing ballet (lyrics in Italian), there is a method to the madness. Please read and put into practice the following procedures for studio set-up and strike.

**SET-UP RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Producer & Director**

Learn to delegate responsibility. If you personally move props, cue music, or tweak lights you are wasting valuable time. The more you can put on paper prior to the day of production the less you'll have to try to remember. If the program is fully-scripted, spend time with the script and mark it carefully. Become very familiar with any pre-produced elements. If the program is not fully-scripted, study the subject matter of the show in order that you might be able to anticipate the direction and flow of the show. The more organized and prepared that you are the less chance for disorganization and confusion when those inevitable changes arise.

**Assignments to your crew must be clear, oftentimes in written form, and usually distributed in the following order:**

**1)** Give the floor director (FD) his/her floor plan and directions as to the set design and dressing.

Usually a floor assistant(s) will be available to help with the set-up. Ideally you will have met with the FD before class, so he/she has a good idea of what you are doing.

**2)** Provide your audio engineer with his/her specially marked script and explain exactly what you want in the way of microphones, audio carts, CDs, etc. Often this can, and should, be written down to save time during production.

**3)** Provide orientation for your camera operators as to position, main subject for each camera, shot lists, etc. Give operators shot sheets if warranted. Remember; remain flexible so that changes during rehearsal can be incorporated in the final taping/broadcast. Cameras will not be ready to move into position for rehearsal until the basic set and lighting are completed.

**4)** Meet with your talent to firm up last minute details and to make him/her comfortable in what may be a strange environment. It is important for the FD to meet with the talent to explain what is taking place during rehearsal and what will take place during the actual production. Also, hand signals and cues must be reviewed so that the FD and talent are "communicating".

**5)** Provide your production assistant (PA) or graphics operator with a detailed list of graphics to be inserted and a copy of the script with graphics noted. Ideally the graphics will already be composed and stored to disk. If so, disk page numbers will be highlighted on the PA's script. Ask the PA to double check the graphic pages for accuracy--(typos, spelling, etc.)

**6)** Make sure that your videotape operator has any playback tapes (with cue points noted) and the record tape(s). Ask the VT operator to review the playback segments that will be used in order to gain familiarity with them.

**7)** Check out your technical director on any special or unusual switcher effects to be used. Routine switcher transitions should be picked up during the run through and rehearsal.

**8)** Review the program with your assistant director (AD) making sure that he/she understands the flow of the program and knows what time cues will be needed. Important--Make sure that you, your AD and talent all agree as to whether the time remaining cues are to end of talent, or end of show.

**The Basics of camera shots**

**WS - MS - CU sequences; using close-ups**

Beginning television news camera people are always taught to take three shots of each subject, using different distances, angles, or lens settings to yield a long shot, medium shot, and close-up of the subject. Then these three pieces of tape are edited together in that order to give the viewer an impression of moving in on the action from the outside, finally becoming involved (through the close-ups) in the action itself. Watch television news coverage of a fire or similar event the next time you can. Typically, you'll see something like:

LONG SHOT, the burning building;

MEDIUM SHOT, firefighters pulling hoses off the truck and carrying them

toward the fire;

CLOSE-UP, firefighter's face or hands as he wrestles with the hose.

Additional shots would tend to be more close-ups: equipment on the truck, hands holding the hose, the faces of spectators, etc. At some time, determined by the pacing of the editing and, in this case, the severity of the fire, there might be a return to the long shot to reestablish the overall layout of the scene in the viewer's mind. Notice the emphasis on close-ups. Television is a relatively low-definition medium, and subjects seen in medium shots or wider just don't come across powerfully on a television screen. It is details, sometimes shot at very close distances, which are most effective in adding visual interest to a story. Use close shots - details of objects, a person's surroundings, or especially of the human face -whenever it is possible and meaningful to do so. They do more than anything else to add excitement and interest to your program. As the amount of information on the screen decreases, so does the viewer's ability to watch it for a long time. This implies that close-ups, which contain relatively little visual information but spread it over the entire area of the screen, shouldn't be held on the screen for a very long time. When presented with a single detail of something, an audience can look at it for no more than three or four seconds before it becomes bored and turns away. Exceptions to this rule occur when there is something going on to maintain interest. For example, moving objects can be held longer than totally inanimate ones. A narrator heard in a voice over may point out interesting details in what is shown so that the audience is continually discovering new aspects of the picture. In these cases, even extreme close-ups can remain on the screen for a relatively long time.

Close-ups of faces, on the other hand, can be held for a long time, as we seem to find endless fascination in that particular subject. Close-ups are very powerful and revealing for interviews and tend to give at least the illusion of great insight into the speaker. By contrast, long and medium shots are used less in television, although they certainly have a very important place in most programs. The audience can become disoriented if they are not occasionally reminded of where they are the overall arrangement of objects and people in the location and the relationships between them. This is the purpose of the long shot. Medium shots reveal more about a single subject, without the emotional commitment of a close-up and they are also most often used for showing the progress of action, as in our fire example above. Of course, there are an infinite number of possible variations. It is the subject matter and overall mood and structure of your program which determine in the end how sequences of different angles views will fit together.

**Jump cuts and the thirty degree rule**

One of the most distracting mistakes it is possible to make in editing is called a "jump cut." If you've watched commercial television all your life, you may in fact never have seen a jump cut. They are so visually distracting, and such pains are taken to avoid them, that this particular error almost never makes it to your home screen.

A jump cut happens when you attempt to edit together **two shots** which are too similar in visual content. The most obvious example might occur if you remove a single sentence from an interview shot while the camera (which recorded the interview originally as a single shot) remained static. What would happen is that the background would remain still, while the subject's head might "jump" a bit to one side, or lips which were closed might appear instantly to open. The result is a very jarring interruption in the otherwise smooth flow of action. There are several solutions to this problem. In the case of the interview, an appropriate response would be a cutaway shot - about which more will be said later.

**Cutaways and inserts**

Often the availability of proper cutaway or insert shots is the only thing which saves the editor from, at best, profound frustration, or possible even insanity You see cutaways frequently in television news interviews. These are the shots of the interviewer looking at his notes, or nodding at what the subject is saying. Usually the cutaway shot has been used to cover up an edit in a continuous shot of the interview subject when removing a few words or sentences would otherwise have produced an unacceptable jump cut. As such, the cutaway is a valuable device, but it should be used with great discretion, as it looks rather contrived. (Often these shots are done after the interview is completed, and the interviewer isn't really reacting to anything - which often shows.) Over-the-shoulder shots are common too - and also often don't work because the sound is noticeably out of sync with the subject's body or facial movements.

It is also possible to cut away to other subjects, like the crowd reacting to a speaker's words, or a close-up of the subject's hands. These sometimes work well and can cover many otherwise embarrassing gaps in visual continuity. Insert shots have another function in that they actually contribute to the meaning of the program. Inserts are shots, or sequences, which usually show

something that a speaker is talking about. While an interview subject describes a process, an insert sequence can be designed to show that process actually taking place. While these segments can be used to cover continuity difficulties they also tend to make a program more interesting and meaningful.

Achieving the proper balance between "people" footage (interviews and speakers) and "process" material is difficult, and of course depends on the nature of the specific program you are making. In general, though, it is better to show something than to talk about it; television is a visual medium and only by making use of its ability to show things as they actually happen can it truly be distinguished from radio or audio tape. Of course, there are programs where the emphasis is on the people involved as much as the things they are doing, and in these cases there is nothing more beautiful or interesting than the human face. So keep your purpose in mind when

deciding on an overall plan for the editing of your programs. Insert and cutaway footage is so important in editing that it is essential to be aware of the need to produce this type of material at the time of shooting. Many discontinuities are not the result of ignorance of the rules on the part of the editor, but happen simply because the required quantity or quality of insert material was never shot. Much of a good camera person's time is spent looking for and recording reaction shots and various close-ups and cutaways which can be used by the editor to cover any difficulties later. It is definitely something to keep in mind when you start to shoot tape.

**Shot timing and pacing**

The need to keep certain shots fairly short was discussed earlier. In general, close-ups do not hold interest as long as medium shots and it is uncommon to see any shot that lasts longer than about ten seconds, but certain types of action can be held longer if it seems appropriate. It is a good idea to vary the length of shots, particularly if many of your shots are fairly short, unless the building of a definite and predictable rhythm is what you have in mind. One final note. Changes in shots that are too frequent and done for no apparent reason can be worse than long static shots. Editing should never be allowed to interfere with or distract from program content.

**Cutting sound**

In professional film editing, it is not considered much of a problem at all to restructure sentences or even words by precise editing to change the meaning of what someone says. Digital audio files and the audio portion of digital video files can be processed using computers to change not only the sequence of sounds, but volume, pitch, and other characteristics. Even so, most audio editing for video is restricted to making cuts between phrases or sentences, trying to fit together the sometimes random-sounding ramblings of your subjects into a smooth whole. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to try to dictate how your subjects' thoughts should be fitted together, so we will concentrate on a few rules and suggestions as to how the continuity of sound fits into the overall production of a program. Most programs of the informational or educational genre have their continuity dictated almost entirely by the content of the sound track. In fact, the spoken word probably conveys most of the actual information in most of the television programs you have seen. This is a difficult problem, because errors in visual continuity (which is what

most of this chapter has been about) are usually much more obvious and distracting to the viewer than a more abstract lack of logic or coherence in what the interview subjects or narrator say. So in many cases the content will have to be adapted to the needs of maintaining a smooth VISUAL flow. Cutting within interview footage, which is often necessary from a content perspective, almost always generates a visually offensive jump cut which requires a cutaway or something similar to reduce the distraction. Sometimes a dissolve or wipe can be used to soften a jump cut. The use of sound other than voices should be considered. The natural sounds of many settings - chirping crickets or the cacophony of a factory - can be used to make some kinds of points more effectively than any narration. The use of music in setting moods is fairly obvious; indeed it is possible, and often very powerful, to edit the visual portion of a program to fit, in both rhythm and content, a prerecorded piece of music. One technical detail about editing sound which seems relevant here involves the timing of different spoken segments to be edited together. In average conversation, most people pause about half a second between sentences. If you are trying to edit dialogue together so that it still sounds natural and flowing, you should try to maintain the time between utterances at about this figure. Most people do not pause noticeably between individual words, although a gap of a tenth of a second or so will go unnoticed if it doesn't occur too often.

Naturally, these times have to be adjusted somewhat to fit the specific speech patterns of the individuals involved, so they are only a guide. A second consideration in sound editing might be thought of as an audio jump cut. Every recording location has a characteristic sound, or presence which may even change slightly during different times of the day. People, too, vary the quality of their voices according to many conditions from stuffy noses to fatigue or emotion. Very few narrators can duplicate the sound of their own voices from one day to the next. Even though two sequences might be recorded using the same equipment in the same location, the quality of the audio may well be so different that a noticeable and objectionable change in sound occurs at an edit point. In editing narrative sequences, the speaking pace must also be fairly constant if the edit is to be "believable." This barely begins to scratch the surface of the field of editing, yet the rules and ideas presented here are basic ones you will have to keep in mind while shooting and editing videotape. Watching television critically, with an eye toward the contribution of the editor to the finished program, then editing your own work, will teach you more about the craft than any stack of books could. Don't be afraid of all those buttons!

**Videotape Editing**

Video editing is the selective copying of material from one videotape (or computer file) to another. The process is entirely electronic. Nothing is cut, glued, or pasted. The original is not altered in any way by the editing process. Successful and efficient editing requires some specialized equipment, some knowledge of how the equipment works, and a great deal of planning and preparation both in shooting original footage and in editing itself.

**Tape to tape editing**

The necessary editing equipment includes two videotape recorders, two television monitors, and an edit controller. The original tape is played back on the source recorder, which is sometimes called the master recorder. This recorder must be designed to be run by remote control. The audio and video outputs of the source recorder are connected to the inputs on the editing recorder, sometimes called the slave recorder. The editing recorder, in addition to being operated by remote control, also needs some features not found on most videotape recorders. First, it must operate in sync with the playback recorder. That is, its internal timing circuits have to lock to the sync portion of the incoming composite video signal. Second, to make clean edits between old and new video, it must be able to go from the playback mode to the record mode and back only in the vertical interval, or the brief time between pictures. Finally, to accomplish this, it must have special erase heads, called "flying" erase heads, actually mounted on the video head assembly. Most videotape recorders have erase heads that are fixed and erase the entire width of the tape. Because the video signal is laid down on tape in long diagonal passes across the tape, the conventional erase head would erase portions of many frames of video. The erase heads mounted on the video drum can erase video one field at a time, allowing very clean transitions between old and new video. The audio and video signals from each recorder are also connected to television monitors. This allows the operator to see and hear what is on either tape at any time. Finally, both recorders are connected to a compatible edit controller. The controller includes the basic transport controls for both recorders, such as fast forward, rewind, play, pause, and stop, plus special editing functions.

**Editing modes:**

In the ASSEMBLE mode it is assumed that there is nothing recorded on the edited videotape after the selected edit point. Each new sequence is edited onto the end of the previous sequence until the tape is completed. No picture or sound which might already have been on the tape is used. In the INSERT mode, it is assumed that material already on the tape is to be retained. New material is inserted into old. Not all of the signals during the edit need to be replaced. The operator sets the editing machine to change the picture or either of the sound channels or any combination of the three. At the end of the edit, the recorder will return from the record mode to the playback mode.

**The Control Track**:

Almost all videotape recorders record and play back a special sixty hertz pulse called the control track. This track is used in playback to make sure the video heads are positioned correctly to read video information recorded on the tape. Any break in the control track, or sudden shift in phase, or loss of signal level will cause a videotape recorder to vary its speed until it returns to lock. This in turn usually causes the picture to break up or disappear entirely. The essential difference between the assemble and insert edit modes is that in the assemble mode new control track is recorded from the edit point on, while in the insert mode prerecorded control track is used and no new control track is generated. Therefore, the picture will always break up at the end of an assemble edit and, conversely, there must always be good continuous control track already on the tape throughout an insert edit or the picture will break up on later playback wherever the control track was flawed, even though no trouble was observed during the actual insert edit. Many editors commonly in use are called control track editors because they use the control track as a reference for all of the editing functions. It is critical to know and understand this. Without a good and continuous control track from at least six seconds prior to an edit point to at least two or three seconds after an edit point it may be impossible to make an edit at all. Actual requirements vary from machine to machine, so it is advisable to make sure there is always at least ten seconds of control track in front of and behind every shot recorded.