

Report the Vote 2 Reporting Basics

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Thanks for being here, I'm Lisa Loving and this is Report the Vote, workshop #2, reporting basics. Brought to you by Pacifica Network Association of Affiliates and Joan Ross, and WNUC LPFM in Detroit.

In this workshop we cover crucial reporting skills, but this is just one episode of a series. Look for the others online at pacificafoundation.org.

Reporting basics is about:

- cultivating sources
 - information gathering
 - story structure for news & features
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- Always bring it back to —> How are elections impacting your local community

 - What is information and where are you going to put it?
 - Who, what, when, where, how and why
 - plan in advance your system of organizing content, and each piece will be easy to find in a pinch
 - use the file names of your content items as organizational tools: date+name+subject (like this----> 061924_loving_bascreportingpdf, 061924_loving_bascreporting.mp3, 061924_loving_bascreporting.jpg). That way the files will clump together in your content folders. Oh yeah: make content folders.`

 - Cultivate a community of colleagues and sources with experiences different from yours
 - Some people call this Diversity, Equity & inclusion, DEI.
 - But when you are a one- or two-person staff, finding balance in your information gathering can be hard when the possibility exists to harm innocent people in your local community – this can be a real concern sometimes when you least expect it.
 - This is my strategy, and it is not for everyone: I find people I think of as touchstones, people from the communities I am reporting on who are steeped in those communities in ways I can never be; people with very informed opinions who are rarely handed a microphone.
 - These touchstones are people I have cultivated as friends and colleagues over time, people I trust with my own professional reputation.
 - I ask my touchstones for a reality check, and I go one step further: I commit myself to doing what the touchstones suggest.

- My goal here is to give the community a small measure of control in the newsroom.
- How to deal with a mountain of content → Decide what is the single most important thing your listeners need to know about your topic.
- Story structure
 - martini glass
 - Open top, narrowed to stem, funneling to wide foundation.

Step by step

- find one sentence that sums up the whole point of your story, and write it down, that's the "stem" of the martini glass.
- think up one or two sentences that set up your stem, introduce the topic or set the scene for the story in some way: this is the lead (sometimes spelled 'lede'), the open top of the martini glass.
- take the main point of your story and add two or three background points: a quote, something about the history of this situation, and some piece of data that shows why we're talking about this right now.
- arrange the supporting points in order of importance.
- in conclusion, reflect back on the main point with an eye toward the future. This is how it started, this is how it's going/what happens next?

When you're on deadline and you feel deep down inside that something is wrong with your draft, just take a moment to think about structure. Sometimes tweaking how you've set up the story clicks the whole thing into place. Is there no history of your issue? Is there no explanatory paragraph? You get the idea.

now-then-now

- take the same info you gathered above, and arrange it on the page with the following chronology of time: now; then; now.

–Chronological:

- Arrange the above info on the page in timeline format.

EXTRA IMPORTANT:

People's right to privacy
Fairness and accuracy are our standards
Center everyday people

Why does grassroots journalism matter and what is it for?

NOAM CHOMSKY IS NOT DEAD. But he was twitter-killed this week, which resulted in re-emergence of this great video clip covering ideas from his book with Edward S Hermann, ***Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media***. When I talk about the difference between commercial media and non-commercial media, [this is really at the heart of what I'm getting at](#). [Shoutout to Ross Reynolds at KUOW in Seattle!](#) He is the first interviewer you see on that clip.

How is information controlled?

Selection of topics
Distribution of concerns
Emphasis
Framing of issues
Filtering of information
Boundaries of debate

What is the result?

Determine
Select
Shape
Control
Restrict
—>In order to serve the interests of dominant elite groups.

Why am I saying this? Because if you are here, chances are you're preparing to report on the 2024 elections for a grassroots media outlet funded by local communities, rather than Walmart, Microsoft, or The Joan B. Kroc Foundation.

This means you have more freedom to report some of the most critical stories at the center of our society today than the New York Times or NPR journalists do. You are powerful!

HOMEWORK

- Choose a subject of interest you are pursuing in election reporting 2024. If you can, read as many stories as possible in the NYT, WashPost, and cable news networks.
- Ask yourself: Who is left out – people, places and/or things – of daily mainstream reporting about your topic of interest?
- Where can I find these people?
- How can I create relationships there and report on the issues important to them?

That's it for our workshop. Friends, listen to me for a minute: Whatever we have 5 years from now is gonna be something you made. So thanks for being with us and hope to see you next time. I'm Lisa Loving and this is Report the Vote. Brought to you by Pacifica Network Association of Affiliates and WNUC LPFM in Detroit.