

# Introduction to News Writing and Reporting

## Lecture 2

### Understanding News – Definition, Values, Types

Lecturer: Baya Trevor



Fig. 1. “Woman and man in studio looking at computer — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Lecture Learning outcomes

By the end of this lecture, students should be able to:

1. **Define news** clearly and distinguish it from related concepts such as information and opinion.
2. **Identify the key characteristics of news** that make it distinct, such as accuracy, timeliness, relevance, and clarity.
3. **Explain the functions of news in society**, including informing the public, shaping opinion, and holding power accountable.
4. **Understand news as a construct**, recognizing how editorial decisions, cultural contexts, and institutional practices shape what is considered “news.”
5. **Analyze the factors influencing news selection**, such as editorial policies, audience interests, resource constraints, and technological tools.
6. **Apply the concept of news values** to determine why certain stories are prioritized over others.
7. **Recognize core news values** (e.g., timeliness, proximity, impact, conflict, novelty, human interest) and explain their role in news judgment.
8. **Discuss how news values are changing in the digital age**, especially with speed, engagement metrics, and algorithmic influence.
9. **Differentiate between hard news and soft news**, noting their unique purposes and audience appeals.
10. **Describe other types of news**, including spot news, features, analysis, investigative, interpretive, and follow-ups.
11. **Compare how news is presented across platforms**—print, broadcast, online, and social media—and evaluate their respective strengths and limitations.
12. **Distinguish between local, national, and international news**, and explain their interconnectedness.
13. **Assess the evolving role of news in contemporary society**, particularly in the face of challenges such as misinformation, audience fragmentation, and the blending of news and entertainment.



Fig. 2. “Man reading newspapers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Introduction

News is the foundation of journalism. It is the primary medium through which societies remain informed, connected, and aware of events that affect them. The concept of news might appear simple at first glance—merely information about recent happenings—but in reality, it is a more complex and constructed phenomenon. Not every occurrence becomes news; rather, news is a selection of events and issues that are judged important, interesting, or relevant to a particular audience.

Understanding news is crucial for aspiring journalists because it shapes how stories are written, what stories are chosen, and how they are presented to the public. Without clarity on what qualifies as news, it becomes difficult to practice effective reporting or meet the expectations of readers and audiences. In the modern information environment, news plays multiple roles. It informs the public about matters of significance, provides a sense of connection to communities both near and far, and even serves as a form of entertainment or distraction. It can influence public opinion, set agendas for political debate, and shape cultural attitudes. At the same time, news is not a fixed concept. What counts as news in one society, or even one community, may not be considered newsworthy in another.

The study of news requires examining three key elements. First, the definition of news—understanding what it is and what distinguishes it from general information. Second, the values of news—the criteria and judgments used to decide which events become news stories. Third, the types of news—the different forms and categories through which news is expressed and consumed. Together, these elements allow us to see how news functions as a system of communication and why it remains central to journalism.



Fig. 3. “Split screen of phone social media and cityscape with bus at night — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# What Is News? Defining the Core of Journalism

News represents timely, relevant information about events or issues that directly impact people's lives and communities. It serves as the backbone of informed democratic society, providing citizens with the knowledge they need to make decisions and understand their world.

At its heart, journalism carries a unique responsibility: to deliver truthful, accurate, and fair reporting based on rigorously verified facts. This commitment distinguishes professional journalism from opinion, speculation, or entertainment, establishing trust between news organizations and their audiences.

The role extends beyond mere information delivery - news serves to inform, educate, and occasionally entertain, while maintaining the highest standards of ethical reporting and public service.



Fig. 5. "Tablet with social media — illustration," Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# What is News? – Basic Understanding

News can be understood as the communication of recent events, ideas, or developments that are judged to hold significance for an audience. It is not simply a random collection of facts but rather a carefully selected and presented narrative about what is happening in the world. News functions as a bridge between reality and public perception, translating the countless events of daily life into stories that inform, engage, and sometimes even entertain.

At its core, news deals with what is new. It emphasizes recency, change, and novelty. If something has just occurred, or if it marks a departure from what was previously known, it becomes a candidate for news. However, novelty alone does not suffice. Not every new development makes the headlines. For instance, the birth of a child is a new event, but only certain births — such as that of a prominent figure's child — are considered newsworthy. This illustrates that news is both about what is new and what is deemed important.

News also carries a sense of relevance. It must connect with the lives, interests, or concerns of the intended audience. A local traffic disruption may be news to residents of a city but meaningless to those living abroad. Similarly, a minor political debate in one country may be ignored elsewhere unless it ties into larger international issues.

Another essential dimension of news is its immediacy. Unlike other forms of knowledge, which may develop over years or decades, news thrives on timeliness. It reflects the here and now, giving people updates on matters unfolding in real time. This is why the news cycle is fast-paced and constantly refreshed.

In sum, news is the record of what is happening and changing in society, filtered through judgments of importance, relevance, and timeliness. It is a constructed form of communication that transforms raw events into meaningful public knowledge.



Fig. 2. “Man reading newspapers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Characteristics of News

News possesses certain defining features that distinguish it from other forms of communication. These characteristics guide journalists in determining what qualifies as news and how it should be presented. While not every news story contains all these qualities, the stronger the presence of these features, the greater its news value.

## 1. Timeliness

News is fundamentally tied to time. It thrives on immediacy and recency. Audiences expect to know what has happened most recently, and a delay in reporting can reduce the value of a story. This explains the rapid pace of news production and the continuous updates in digital and broadcast media.

## 2. Proximity

Events that occur closer to the audience are more likely to be considered newsworthy. Proximity may be geographical, such as a natural disaster in a nearby city, or cultural, such as developments in countries with strong social, historical, or political ties to the audience's community.

## 3. Relevance

For an event to become news, it must matter to the intended audience. This relevance can take many forms—economic, political, social, or cultural. Stories about health crises, policy changes, or local infrastructure issues gain attention because they directly affect people's lives.

## 4. Novelty

News often highlights what is unusual or unexpected. The unusual nature of an event—whether a rare natural occurrence, an extraordinary human achievement, or a shocking crime—grabs public attention because it departs from everyday experience.



Fig. 3. “Split screen of phone social media and cityscape with bus at night — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Characteristics of News

## 5. Prominence

Events involving well-known people, institutions, or organizations attract attention. Public figures, celebrities, and political leaders are frequently featured in news stories because their actions carry symbolic weight and broader implications.

## 6. Conflict

Disagreement, tension, or struggle is a central element of news. Political debates, labor disputes, legal battles, and international conflicts naturally draw attention because they reflect differing interests and the potential for change.

## 7. Impact

The greater the effect of an event on people's lives, the more newsworthy it becomes. A decision affecting national security, a policy change altering taxation, or a natural disaster displacing thousands has a significant impact and thus commands public interest.

## 8. Human Interest

Stories that appeal to emotions—joy, sadness, sympathy, or inspiration—also qualify as news. These stories may not always be of broad social significance, but they resonate with audiences because they reflect shared human experiences.

## 9. Clarity and Simplicity

News needs to be understandable. Complex events are simplified and explained in a way that makes them accessible to the general public. A story that cannot be clearly communicated is less likely to be considered news.

Taken together, these characteristics help journalists and editors identify which events merit coverage. They also explain why different media outlets produce different versions of news—because they weigh and prioritize these characteristics differently depending on their audience and editorial goals.



Fig. 2. “Man reading newspapers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Characteristics of News

Professional journalists rely on established criteria to evaluate which stories deserve coverage and how much attention they warrant.

## Impact

How many people are affected by the story? Consider a city purchasing new fire engines that will reduce response times and potentially save lives across multiple neighborhoods.

## Prominence

Who is involved in the story? Actions taken by a state representative carry more news value than similar actions by an unknown citizen.

## Timeliness

Why does this matter right now? The discovery of a new dinosaur species becomes news when scientists publish their findings, not when they began their research.

## Proximity

How close is the story to the audience? Local events naturally matter more to local readers than distant occurrences with no direct connection.

Fig. 4. “Man and woman staring at each other in newsroom — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.



# News vs. Information vs. Opinion

In the study of journalism, it is important to distinguish between news, information, and opinion. Although these three concepts overlap, they serve different purposes and follow different standards of communication. Understanding their differences ensures that journalists maintain clarity, objectivity, and credibility in their work.

## 1. News

News refers to the reporting of recent events, developments, or issues that are judged significant for an audience. It is fact-based, timely, and presented with the intention of informing rather than persuading. News stories are expected to be accurate, balanced, and verifiable. For example, a report on a government policy announcement or the outcome of a court ruling is categorized as news.

## 2. Information

Information is a broader concept. It includes any form of data, knowledge, or communication that conveys facts, instructions, or descriptions. Not all information qualifies as news. For instance, a train timetable, a weather forecast, or an encyclopedia entry provides information but does not automatically constitute news. For information to become news, it must pass through filters of timeliness, relevance, and significance. In this sense, all news is information, but not all information is news.

## 3. Opinion

Opinion expresses judgment, interpretation, or perspective rather than objective fact. It is subjective and shaped by personal beliefs, values, or experiences. In journalism, opinions appear in editorials, commentaries, columns, and reviews. While opinion pieces may be based on facts, their purpose is not simply to report but to argue, persuade, or evaluate. For example, an editorial on whether a government policy is beneficial goes beyond reporting the policy itself and instead presents an interpretation of its implications.

## 4. Why the Distinction Matters

Blurring the line between these categories can create confusion or mistrust among audiences. If a piece of opinion is presented as news, it risks misleading the public into accepting subjective views as objective truth. Similarly, presenting raw information without context can leave audiences uninformed about its relevance. A clear distinction between news, information, and opinion safeguards journalistic integrity and helps audiences critically engage with media content.



Fig. 3. “Split screen of phone social media and cityscape with bus at night — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.



# The Power of News: Why Some Stories Make It and Others Don't

## Editorial Selection

News is carefully selected based on "newsworthiness" - what experienced editors and journalists determine will matter most to their audience

## Limited Resources

Finite space in print and airtime on broadcasts means only stories with the strongest appeal and importance reach the public

## Societal Impact

News shapes public opinion, influences personal and policy decisions, and serves as a crucial check on power and authority

Understanding this selection process helps explain why certain stories dominate headlines while others remain untold, highlighting the tremendous responsibility journalists bear in curating information for society.

Fig. 2. "Man reading newspapers — illustration," Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Functions of News in Society

News is not only about transmitting facts; it serves essential purposes that sustain social order, democratic life, and cultural identity. By examining its functions, we can better appreciate why news remains central to human societies despite technological change and evolving media platforms.

## 1. Informing the Public

The most fundamental function of news is to provide people with information about their world. News keeps individuals updated on political decisions, economic trends, health concerns, natural disasters, and other developments that may affect their lives. Without this flow of information, citizens would struggle to make informed decisions or respond to changing circumstances.

## 2. Educating Society

News does more than deliver facts; it also educates by providing context, background, and explanation. Through analysis, interviews, and explanatory reports, news helps people understand complex issues such as climate change, international conflicts, or technological advances. It transforms raw events into meaningful knowledge that contributes to a more informed society.

## 3. Acting as a Watchdog

News serves as a check on power by monitoring the actions of governments, corporations, and influential individuals. Investigative reporting exposes corruption, abuses of authority, and unethical practices. This watchdog role is crucial for accountability, ensuring that those in positions of power remain answerable to the public.

## 4. Providing a Forum for Debate

News creates spaces where ideas, perspectives, and debates can be shared. By reporting on diverse viewpoints, it enables dialogue on social and political issues. This function strengthens democracy by allowing the public to evaluate competing arguments before forming opinions or making decisions.



Fig. 2. “Man reading newspapers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Functions of News in Society

## 5. Shaping Public Opinion

While news is expected to be objective, the issues it highlights inevitably influence how people think and what they consider important. By choosing which stories to emphasize, news outlets set the public agenda. Over time, this process shapes public priorities, perceptions, and attitudes.

## 6. Building Social Cohesion

News contributes to a sense of shared experience. Major events—such as national celebrations, crises, or international sports competitions—are collectively consumed through news media. This creates a feeling of unity and belonging, as people engage with the same stories and reflect on their significance together.

## 7. Offering Entertainment

Although its primary role is informational, news also entertains. Human-interest features, lifestyle segments, and coverage of celebrity culture or unusual events attract audiences not only for their informational value but also for leisure and enjoyment. This blend of seriousness and lightness keeps audiences engaged with the news cycle.

## 8. Supporting Cultural Identity

News reflects and reinforces cultural values, traditions, and narratives. Local news, for instance, strengthens community ties by highlighting issues, events, and achievements that matter to specific groups. In doing so, it maintains cultural continuity and helps societies define themselves.

In essence, the functions of news go beyond the delivery of facts. News informs, educates, monitors, entertains, unites, and influences. It is both a practical tool for daily life and a central pillar of social and political order.



Fig. 3. “Split screen of phone social media and cityscape with bus at night — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# The Idea of News as a Construct

News may appear to be a simple mirror of reality, but in truth, it is a constructed product. The events of the world are countless and continuous, yet only a fraction of them become news. This selection and presentation process reveals that news is not reality itself, but a particular version of reality shaped by human judgment, organizational routines, and cultural expectations.

## 1. Selection of Events

Not every occurrence is considered newsworthy. Editors and journalists decide which events are significant enough to report, guided by criteria such as timeliness, impact, and audience relevance. For example, a small protest may receive no coverage, while a larger one might dominate headlines. The act of choosing already begins the process of constructing news.

## 2. Framing and Presentation

Even after an event is selected, the way it is framed influences how audiences interpret it. The same story can be presented as a crisis, a victory, or a controversy depending on the angle taken by journalists. Headlines, word choice, images, and the amount of coverage given all contribute to shaping public understanding.

## 3. Influence of Media Institutions

News is also constructed within the constraints of media organizations. Deadlines, space limitations, audience preferences, and commercial pressures shape how stories are produced. A television report may reduce a complex issue to a two-minute segment, while an online platform may prioritize stories that generate higher clicks. These institutional factors affect how events are represented.

## 4. Role of Culture and Society

What counts as news is tied to cultural values and social norms. An event considered highly significant in one culture may be ignored in another. For instance, a royal wedding might be headline news in some countries but regarded as less important elsewhere. Cultural attitudes toward politics, religion, or morality can shape whether an event is elevated to news status.

## 5. Audience Expectations

Audiences also play a role in constructing news. Media outlets monitor public interest, feedback, and trends to decide what to cover. With digital platforms, this influence has grown stronger, as algorithms highlight stories based on user engagement. As a result, news construction today is increasingly interactive, shaped by both producers and consumers.



Fig. 2. “Man reading newspapers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Factors that Shape News Selection

The process of deciding what becomes news is neither random nor neutral. Journalists and editors constantly make choices about which events to highlight and which to ignore. These decisions are influenced by a range of factors that shape the selection of stories. Understanding these factors reveals why different news outlets produce different versions of reality.

## 1. News Values

The most immediate factor is the set of news values used to judge the significance of events. Criteria such as timeliness, proximity, prominence, conflict, and impact guide journalists in deciding what qualifies as news. An event that scores highly on several of these values is more likely to be reported.

## 2. Editorial Policies

Each media organization operates under editorial guidelines that reflect its mission, audience, and style. A business newspaper prioritizes economic and financial stories, while a lifestyle magazine highlights fashion or entertainment. Editorial direction sets boundaries on what kinds of stories are pursued.

## 3. Audience Interest

News outlets must cater to their readers, viewers, or listeners. Stories are often selected based on what will capture audience attention. With the rise of digital platforms, real-time data on clicks and shares further shapes story selection, as media organizations respond to measurable audience demand.

## 4. Organizational Constraints

Practical factors such as deadlines, space limitations, and available resources also determine what gets covered. A newsroom with limited staff may not be able to send reporters to distant locations, while broadcast time slots restrict how many stories can be aired.

## 5. Competition and Market Pressures

News outlets compete for attention and credibility. If a rival outlet breaks a major story, others may feel compelled to follow. Similarly, the pressure to attract advertisers and maintain circulation can influence what stories are emphasized, often favoring those that promise higher engagement.

## 6. Political and Economic Environment

The wider social environment also affects news selection. In some contexts, governments exert influence through regulation, censorship, or direct control of media. In others, corporate interests and ownership structures shape editorial priorities. These external pressures can determine what is highlighted or suppressed.



Fig. 3. “Split screen of phone social media and cityscape with bus at night — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Factors that Shape News Selection

## 7. Cultural and Social Norms

Cultural values play a role in determining what is newsworthy. Events that align with shared traditions, moral codes, or social expectations are more likely to receive attention. For example, stories about national heroes or cultural festivals may be given prominence in one society but overlooked in another.

## 8. Availability of Information

Some events are more accessible to reporters than others. Stories from official institutions, such as government briefings or corporate press releases, are easier to cover because they provide ready-made information. By contrast, stories from marginalized communities may be harder to access and therefore less likely to appear in mainstream news.



Fig. 2. “Man reading newspapers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# News Values – The Concept of Newsworthiness

News values are the professional judgments and criteria that determine whether an event, issue, or development is considered worthy of being reported. They function as filters that help journalists and editors decide which stories to select from the countless events occurring at any given moment. Without such values, the task of news production would be overwhelming, as not every occurrence can be covered.

## 1. The Idea of Newsworthiness

Newsworthiness refers to the quality that makes a story stand out as significant to the audience. It is not an objective property of events themselves but rather a set of judgments applied by journalists within the context of their media organization and target readership. An event becomes newsworthy when it aligns with certain recognized values—whether because it is timely, relevant, dramatic, or emotionally compelling.

## 2. News Values as Gatekeeping Tools

Journalists act as gatekeepers, deciding what passes into the public domain as news. News values guide these decisions, ensuring consistency and focus in reporting. For instance, a newsroom may give preference to stories with national impact over those with limited local importance, or prioritize breaking developments over routine updates.

## 3. Variability of News Values

It is important to note that news values are not fixed or universal. They vary across cultures, societies, and media outlets. What is considered highly newsworthy in one country may be overlooked in another. Similarly, different types of media—such as a tabloid newspaper versus a public broadcaster—apply news values differently, with one emphasizing sensationalism and the other prioritizing public service.

## 4. News Values and Professional Norms

For journalists, news values are not just practical tools but also part of professional identity. They shape the routines of reporting, the organization of newsroom discussions, and the expectations of what constitutes “a good story.” This shared understanding of values helps maintain a standard of practice within the profession.



Fig. 3. “Split screen of phone social media and cityscape with bus at night — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# News Values – The Concept of Newsworthiness

## 5. Newsworthiness in the Digital Age

The rise of online platforms has reshaped traditional ideas of newsworthiness. Audience engagement metrics such as clicks, shares, and comments increasingly influence story selection, alongside traditional editorial judgment. This creates a hybrid model in which professional values intersect with algorithmic visibility and user demand.

In essence, news values are the backbone of the news selection process. They define what is important, relevant, and interesting enough to warrant attention, shaping not only the stories we read and watch but also how we collectively perceive the world.

In summary, the selection of news is the outcome of multiple interacting factors—professional judgment, institutional priorities, audience demand, and external influences. Recognizing these factors helps explain why news is never a complete record of reality but a selective construction shaped by context.



Fig. 2. “Man reading newspapers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Core News Values (Timeliness, Proximity, Impact)

Core news values are the specific criteria used to evaluate whether an event is significant enough to be reported. These values function as practical guidelines for journalists, helping them judge the relative importance of competing stories. While the exact list can vary depending on the context, several values consistently shape news decisions across most societies and media systems.

## 1. Timeliness

News is about the present. Events that have just occurred, or are unfolding at the moment, carry the strongest news value. The more recent the story, the greater its urgency and appeal. Timeliness explains why breaking news often dominates coverage and why older events fade quickly from headlines.

## 2. Proximity

Events closer to the audience are considered more newsworthy than those far away. Proximity can be geographical, such as a local election or accident, or cultural, such as developments in countries that share language, history, or political ties with the audience's nation. Proximity strengthens the sense of relevance.

## 3. Impact

The greater the consequences of an event, the stronger its news value. A decision that affects millions of people, such as a change in tax policy, carries more weight than a small local administrative matter. Impact measures how many people are influenced and to what degree.

## 4. Prominence

Stories involving well-known individuals or institutions gain greater attention. Actions by political leaders, celebrities, athletes, or corporations are newsworthy because of their symbolic importance and the public's interest in influential figures.

## 5. Conflict

Tension, disagreement, and struggle are inherently newsworthy. Political rivalries, labor strikes, wars, or even sports competitions capture attention because they dramatize opposing forces and outcomes. Conflict provides a narrative structure that audiences easily recognize.



Fig. 3. “Split screen of phone social media and cityscape with bus at night — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Core News Values (Timeliness, Proximity, Impact)

## 6. Novelty or Rarity

Events that are unusual, surprising, or rare attract attention. A natural phenomenon occurring once in a century, an extraordinary human achievement, or an odd crime all fall under this value. Novelty provides the element of surprise that makes a story memorable.

## 7. Human Interest

Stories that evoke emotion or highlight personal experiences also qualify as news. Human-interest stories may not always have broad social significance, but they appeal to the audience's curiosity, empathy, or sense of wonder. Profiles of ordinary people achieving extraordinary things are classic examples.

## 8. Currency

Some issues remain in the news because they are part of ongoing public discussion. Even when there is no new development, a topic like climate change, unemployment, or education reform may generate stories simply because it remains relevant in public discourse.

These values do not operate in isolation. Often, the strength of a story lies in the combination of several values—such as a timely event involving a prominent figure that also carries widespread impact. The balancing of these values explains why certain stories dominate headlines while others remain unnoticed.



Fig. 2. “Man reading newspapers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Changing Nature of News Values in the Digital Age

While traditional news values such as timeliness, proximity, impact, and conflict remain important, the digital revolution has transformed how these values are applied. The rise of online media, social platforms, and 24-hour news cycles has reshaped both the production and consumption of news, leading to new priorities and altered definitions of newsworthiness.

## 1. Speed and Immediacy

Digital platforms demand constant updates. The emphasis on breaking news has intensified, with journalists competing to publish stories within minutes of events occurring. Accuracy, though still crucial, is sometimes compromised in favor of speed, leading to an environment where initial reports are frequently revised or corrected.

## 2. Audience Engagement Metrics

News values today are increasingly influenced by measurable audience behavior. Online clicks, views, shares, and comments often guide editorial decisions. Stories that generate high engagement may be prioritized, regardless of their traditional importance, giving rise to sensational or entertainment-driven content.

## 3. Global Proximity

Digital media blurs geographical boundaries. Stories from distant locations can quickly become relevant if they resonate emotionally or culturally with a global audience. For example, a natural disaster in a faraway country may gain worldwide attention due to powerful visuals shared on social media.

## 4. Visual Impact

Images and videos carry heightened importance in the digital age. Stories with strong visual content are more likely to spread widely online, as visuals capture attention faster than text. This shifts the value of novelty and human interest toward events that can be illustrated visually.

## 5. Personalization and Algorithms

Algorithms on platforms such as search engines and social media increasingly decide which stories reach audiences. Newsworthiness is no longer determined only by editorial judgment but also by automated systems that rank stories based on user preferences and predicted interest. This creates individualized news agendas for different audiences.



Fig. 3. “Split screen of phone social media and cityscape with bus at night — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Changing Nature of News Values in the Digital Age

## 6. Virality and Shareability

The ability of a story to spread rapidly across networks has become a new measure of its news value. Stories designed for shareability—through emotional appeal, shock value, or humor—gain prominence, even if they lack traditional significance. This explains the rise of “clickbait” headlines and trending topics.

## 7. Blurring of Hard and Soft News

Digital news environments often blur the distinction between serious, high-impact stories and lighter, entertainment-driven ones. A report on political reform may appear alongside celebrity gossip, giving both equal visibility on news feeds. This reflects shifting audience expectations in the digital age.

In short, the digital era has not erased traditional news values but has layered new priorities on top of them. Speed, engagement, visuals, and shareability have joined timeliness, impact, and conflict as defining features of newsworthiness. The result is a more dynamic but also more fragmented news environment, where what counts as news is shaped not only by journalists but also by algorithms and audiences themselves.



Fig. 2. “Man reading newspapers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Hard News vs. Soft News

News can be broadly divided into two major categories: hard news and soft news. This distinction reflects differences in subject matter, purpose, style, and audience appeal. While both forms are essential to journalism, they serve different functions within the media landscape.

## 1. Hard News

Hard news deals with serious, significant, and often urgent matters. It focuses on issues that directly affect society, governance, and public life.

**Content:** Politics, government decisions, wars, disasters, crime, economics, and public health.

**Purpose:** To inform the audience quickly and accurately about events that have immediate relevance or consequences.

**Tone and Style:** Objective, concise, and fact-driven. It avoids unnecessary commentary or emotional appeal.

**Examples:** A report on a presidential election result, a natural disaster, or a major court ruling.

Hard news stories are often time-sensitive. Their value decreases quickly once the event passes or new developments arise.

## 2. Soft News

Soft news focuses on human interest, entertainment, lifestyle, and cultural topics. It is not driven primarily by urgency but by curiosity, emotion, or leisure.

**Content:** Celebrity news, lifestyle features, sports profiles, fashion trends, travel, health tips, or unusual events.

**Purpose:** To engage, entertain, or provide background context rather than deliver urgent information.

**Tone and Style:** More descriptive, narrative, and flexible. It often uses storytelling techniques to captivate the reader.

**Examples:** An interview with a movie star, a feature on holiday destinations, or a story about a person achieving an extraordinary personal goal.

## 3. The Relationship Between Hard and Soft News

Although distinct, hard and soft news often coexist within the same media outlet. Newspapers, television bulletins, and online platforms balance both forms to attract a wide audience. Hard news establishes credibility and authority, while soft news sustains interest and engagement.



Fig. 3. “Split screen of phone social media and cityscape with bus at night — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Hard News vs. Soft News

## 4. Shifting Boundaries

In the digital age, the line between hard and soft news has blurred. Online platforms place political updates next to celebrity gossip, giving them equal visibility. Stories that begin as hard news may be given soft-news treatment through personalized narratives, and soft news often incorporates elements of hard news to remain relevant.

In summary, hard news provides the backbone of journalism by addressing issues of serious social significance, while soft news complements it by appealing to human emotions and lifestyle interests. Together, they ensure that news serves both informative and entertainment functions in society.



Fig. 2. “Man reading newspapers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Other Types of News (Spot, Feature, Analysis, etc.)

Beyond the broad division into hard and soft news, journalism also categorizes stories according to form, depth, and purpose. These different types of news serve complementary roles in informing, engaging, and educating audiences.

## 1. Spot News

Spot news refers to immediate, breaking events that require urgent reporting.

**Nature:** Unplanned, unexpected, and often dramatic.

**Examples:** Accidents, natural disasters, sudden political announcements, or crime reports.

**Characteristics:** Reported quickly with emphasis on accuracy, clarity, and timeliness. Updates are often provided as the story develops.

## 2. Feature News

Feature stories go beyond immediate events, offering depth, background, and human interest.

**Nature:** Planned and researched over time.

**Examples:** Profiles of individuals, explorations of cultural trends, or behind-the-scenes looks at ongoing issues.

**Characteristics:** Narrative style, descriptive detail, and focus on storytelling. Features are not bound by strict time sensitivity.

## 3. News Analysis

Analysis provides interpretation and explanation, helping audiences understand the significance of events.

**Nature:** Goes beyond reporting the facts to place them in context.

**Examples:** Explaining the implications of a new government policy, or examining the causes of an economic crisis.

**Characteristics:** Fact-based but interpretive; bridges news and opinion by explaining “why” and “how” in addition to “what.”



Fig. 3. “Split screen of phone social media and cityscape with bus at night — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Other Types of News (Spot, Feature, Analysis, etc.)

## 4. Investigative News

Investigative reporting involves in-depth research to uncover hidden truths.

**Nature:** Long-term, resource-intensive, often exposing wrongdoing.

**Examples:** Reports on corruption, human rights abuses, or corporate scandals.

**Characteristics:** Requires extensive evidence, interviews, and documentation. Its value lies in revealing information not readily accessible to the public.

## 5. Follow-Up News

Follow-up stories revisit earlier reports to provide new details or outcomes.

**Nature:** Extends the life of a news event.

**Examples:** Updates on a criminal trial after an initial arrest, or coverage of relief efforts following a disaster.

**Characteristics:** Keeps audiences informed as events progress, reinforcing the sense of continuity.

## 6. Interpretive News

Interpretive reporting combines factual coverage with explanatory depth.

**Nature:** Similar to analysis but often broader, drawing connections between different events or trends.

**Examples:** Explaining how global economic changes affect local industries, or tracing the roots of an ongoing conflict.

**Characteristics:** Bridges news and background research, enhancing audience understanding.

These types of news collectively enrich the media landscape. Spot news keeps audiences updated on immediate developments, while features, analysis, and investigative reporting provide depth, context, and long-term significance. The interplay of these forms ensures that journalism fulfills its role of informing the public both quickly and thoroughly.



Fig. 2. “Man reading newspapers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# News Across Platforms (Print, Broadcast, Online, Social Media)

The way news is delivered has evolved dramatically over time. Different platforms have distinct characteristics that shape how news is produced, presented, and consumed. Understanding these differences is essential because the same event can appear very differently depending on the medium through which it is reported.

## 1. Print Media

Print newspapers and magazines represent the traditional form of journalism.

**Strengths:** Depth, detail, and permanence. Print allows for in-depth reporting, analysis, and carefully edited content.

**Style:** Structured writing, headlines, subheadings, and images to support text.

**Limitations:** Slow in comparison to electronic media; once printed, stories cannot be updated until the next edition.

## 2. Broadcast Media (Radio and Television)

Broadcast news introduced immediacy and accessibility.

**Strengths:** Fast delivery, visual and audio elements, ability to reach mass audiences simultaneously.

**Style:** Concise reporting with strong emphasis on visuals (television) and sound (radio).

**Limitations:** Time constraints; stories are often compressed into short segments, limiting depth.

## 3. Online News Platforms

Digital media revolutionized the news industry.

**Strengths:** Instant publication, continuous updates, interactivity, and integration of multimedia (text, video, images, graphics).

**Style:** Flexible formats—breaking updates, live blogs, long-form reports. Hyperlinks provide access to background material.

**Limitations:** Risk of information overload, reliance on speed over accuracy, and the rise of misinformation.



*Digital Metropolis: Split Screen of Smartphone Social Media and Cityscape with Night Bus — Illustration. Generated by Gamma.app (AI tool), September 5, 2025.*

# News Across Platforms (Print, Broadcast, Online, Social Media)

## 4. Social Media

Platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram have become central to news distribution.

**Strengths:** Real-time updates, wide reach, direct engagement with audiences. Citizens can also act as news creators, contributing eyewitness accounts.

**Style:** Short, visual, and highly shareable content designed for quick consumption.

**Limitations:** Lack of editorial oversight, spread of fake news, and algorithm-driven visibility that may prioritize popularity over importance.

## 5. Convergence of Platforms

In today's media landscape, boundaries between platforms are increasingly blurred. Traditional outlets now publish online, use social media for distribution, and adapt content across formats. For example, a print story may be repurposed as a video for television, posted online, and shared widely through social networks.

The diversity of platforms has expanded access to news but has also complicated the process of judging credibility and importance. Each medium emphasizes different values: print focuses on depth, broadcast on immediacy, online platforms on speed and interactivity, and social media on engagement and virality. Together, they form a complex ecosystem through which modern audiences encounter news.



Fig. 2. “Man reading newspapers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Local, National, and International News

News is also categorized according to scope. The scale at which a story is reported influences both its content and its relevance to different audiences. Local, national, and international news each perform unique roles in keeping society informed.

## 1. Local News

Local news focuses on issues, events, and developments within a community, town, or region.

**Content:** Municipal governance, community events, crime reports, local business activities, education updates, and neighborhood issues.

**Significance:** Provides residents with practical information that directly affects their daily lives, such as changes in local laws, transport disruptions, or school announcements.

**Style:** Often more personal and community-oriented, highlighting individuals and grassroots concerns.

## 2. National News

National news covers events of wider significance within the boundaries of a country.

**Content:** National politics, government decisions, economic trends, health policies, and major cultural developments.

**Significance:** Shapes public awareness of national priorities, builds a sense of identity, and informs citizens about matters that influence the entire population.

**Style:** Broader in scope than local news, often involving formal reporting on institutions, policies, and public debates.

## 3. International News

International or foreign news reports on events beyond national borders.

**Content:** Diplomacy, wars, global economics, climate change, international organizations, and foreign elections.

**Significance:** Provides perspective on how global developments affect domestic life, while also connecting audiences to the broader international community.

**Style:** Requires context and interpretation, as audiences may be unfamiliar with foreign settings or political systems.



Fig. 3. “Split screen of phone social media and cityscape with bus at night — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# Local, National, and International News

## 4. Interconnections Across Levels

These three categories are not isolated. Local issues can grow into national debates, while international events often have local consequences. For example, a global financial crisis may lead to national policy changes that directly impact local businesses and households.

In short, the scope of news—local, national, or international—determines how events are framed and why they matter to audiences. Together, these levels ensure that journalism provides both immediate community relevance and broader awareness of national and global affairs.



Fig. 2. “Man reading newspapers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# The Evolving Role of News in Contemporary Society

The role of news has always been central to human communities, but in today's world it has become more complex and multifaceted. Social, political, technological, and cultural changes have transformed not only how news is produced and consumed but also how it functions in society.

## 1. From Information to Conversation

In the past, news primarily flowed in one direction—from journalists to the public. Today, audiences are no longer passive receivers. Through social media, comment sections, and citizen journalism, they actively contribute to the news process. News has shifted from a one-way channel of information to a two-way conversation.

## 2. Democratization of News Production

Digital technologies have lowered the barriers to entry for news creation. Ordinary citizens can record events on smartphones, share them instantly, and reach a global audience. This has expanded the sources of news but also raised questions about accuracy, verification, and accountability.

## 3. Fragmentation of Audiences

Where once entire communities consumed the same newspapers or broadcast bulletins, audiences are now divided across countless platforms and outlets. Personalization algorithms deliver different news feeds to different individuals, reducing the shared collective experience and sometimes deepening divisions within society.

## 4. Pressure of Speed and Competition

The demand for constant updates in a 24-hour news cycle has intensified competition among outlets. Speed often takes priority over depth, increasing the risk of errors and superficial coverage. Audiences are left with more information but not always more understanding.

## 5. Rise of Misinformation and Fake News

The digital age has also opened the door to widespread misinformation. False stories can circulate as quickly as verified ones, challenging the credibility of journalism and undermining trust in media institutions. Professional journalists now carry the added responsibility of fact-checking and combating disinformation.



Fig. 3. “Split screen of phone social media and cityscape with bus at night — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# The Evolving Role of News in Contemporary Society

## 6. News as Entertainment

The blending of news and entertainment has become more pronounced. Many outlets frame stories in dramatic or sensational ways to attract attention. While this approach broadens appeal, it risks reducing serious issues to mere spectacle and undermining the informative role of journalism.

## 7. Continuing Role in Democracy and Society

Despite challenges, news remains vital to democratic life and social cohesion. It informs citizens, holds power accountable, fosters debate, and connects communities to wider national and global contexts. Its evolving role reflects not a decline in importance, but an adaptation to new environments and expectations.

In conclusion, the role of news in contemporary society is both expanded and challenged. It is no longer just a record of events but an interactive, contested, and constantly shifting system of communication. To understand news today is to recognize its traditional functions while also acknowledging its transformation in a digital and interconnected world.



Fig. 2. “Man reading newspapers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.



Fig. 6. "People reading news, others on phone — illustration," Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

## More News Values That Capture Attention

### The Bizarre/Rarity

Unusual or unexpected events that break from routine. The classic journalism example remains "Man bites dog" - the reversal of expectations creates instant newsworthiness.

### Currency

Topics that are trending or part of ongoing public conversations. Viral social media phenomena or developments in widely-discussed issues gain immediate relevance.

### Conflict

Stories featuring opposing forces, tension, or disagreement naturally draw attention. Political protests, legal battles, and competitive elections exemplify this value.

### Human Interest

Emotional stories that resonate on a personal level. A child's cancer battle that inspires thousands to donate demonstrates how individual stories can capture universal themes.

# Types of News: What Are We Reporting?

News content falls into distinct categories, each serving different audience needs and employing unique storytelling approaches.



## Hard News

Immediate, fact-driven stories about current events including crime reports, political developments, natural disasters, and breaking news that demands urgent public attention.



## Soft News

Feature stories focusing on human interest, lifestyle trends, entertainment, sports, and cultural topics that inform and engage without urgent time pressure.



## Investigative News

In-depth reporting that uncovers hidden truths, exposes corruption, or reveals systematic problems requiring extensive research and verification.



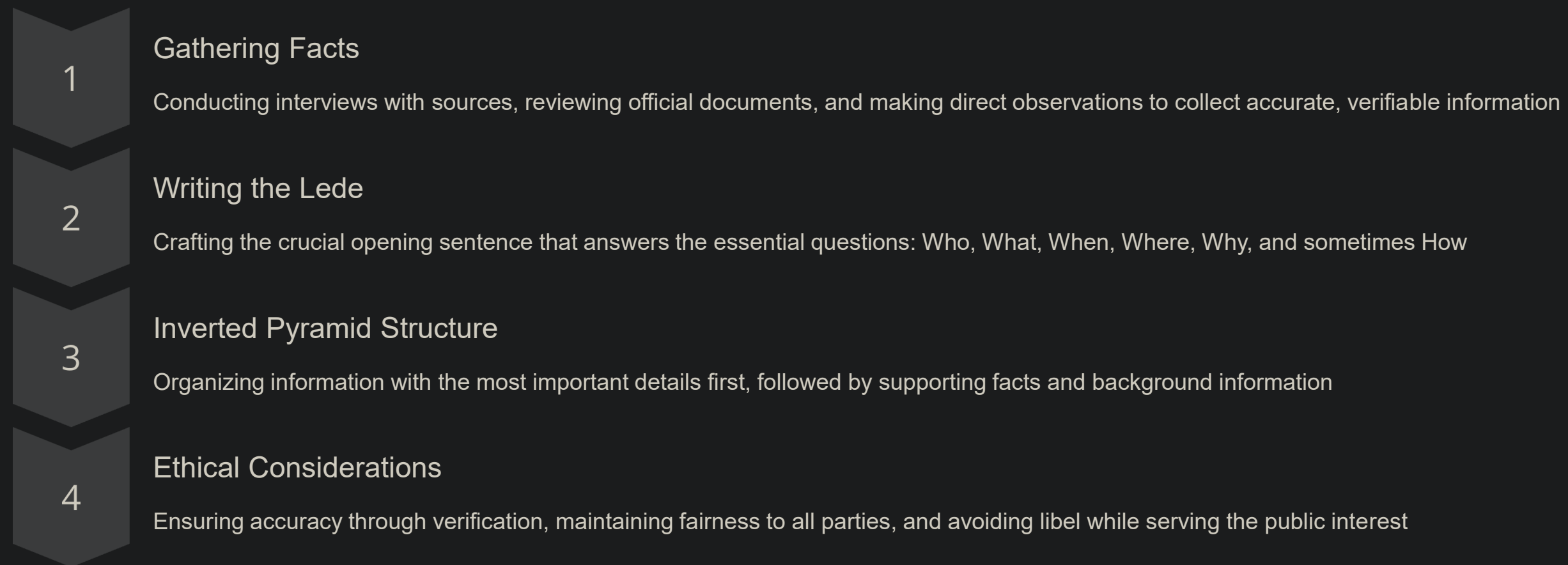
## Opinion and Editorial

Analysis, commentary, and expert perspectives that help audiences understand complex issues and shape informed public debate on important topics.



Fig. 4. “Man and woman staring at each other in newsroom — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# The News Writing Process: From Reporting to Publishing



# Why Understanding News Values Matters for Everyone



Fig. 7. “Journalist looking at multiple displays — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

## For Journalists

These values guide editorial decisions about story selection, resource allocation, and presentation priorities, ensuring coverage serves the public interest effectively.



Fig. 8. “Journalist looking at statistics — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

## For PR Professionals

Understanding news values enables strategic communication, helping craft pitches and press releases that meet journalist criteria for newsworthiness and coverage.



Fig. 9. “People consuming news on phone — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

## For News Consumers

Media literacy develops when audiences recognize these principles, enabling more discerning consumption and evaluation of news content quality and importance.

# Conclusion: Mastering News Means Mastering Connection

News transcends mere fact-reporting to become a bridge connecting communities, ideas, and understanding. It represents the intersection of relevance, emotion, and precise timing in human communication.

## Beyond Facts

Effective news creates meaningful connections between events and audiences, transforming information into insight and understanding

## Universal Principles

News values provide a framework for understanding how stories shape our collective awareness and influence societal conversations

## Lifelong Learning

Whether creating, reporting, or consuming news, these principles guide us toward information that truly matters and serves the greater good

"Let's stay curious, critical, and connected to the news that shapes our understanding of the world around us."



Fig. 10. "Digital golden orbs or worlds connected with lines — illustration," Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.

# References

- The Elements of Journalism, Bill Kovach & Tom Rosenstiel, Crown Publishing Group, 2014
- Reporting for the Media, Fred Fedler, John R. Bender, Lucinda Davenport & Michael W. Drager, Oxford University Press, 2016
- The Associated Press Stylebook, Associated Press, Basic Books, 2022
- Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism, Tim Harrower, McGraw-Hill Education, 2012
- Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method, Carole Rich, Cengage Learning, 2020



Fig. 2. “Man reading newspapers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 5 Sept. 2025.