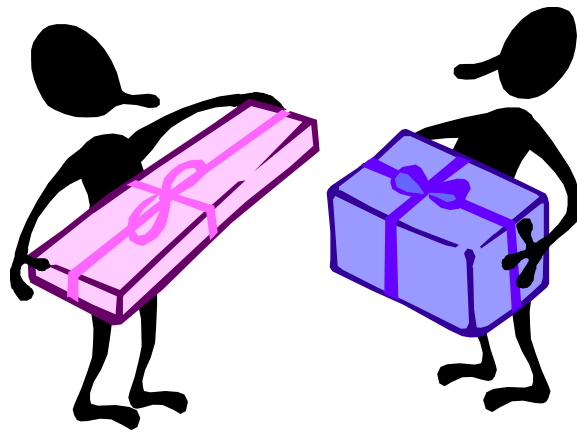


TV

Packages⁰⁸





TV News “Packages”⁰⁸:



Note: This packet is just a summary, followed by some tips from former staff members and pros. Consult your teacher for additional references, handouts, video and script samples, etc.

TV News Packages in Advanced Broadcast Writing are video reports in which a reporter “tells a story” through narration, visuals, footage (known as “B-Roll), interview sound bites, natural sound from “on location,” and graphics. The story follows all good story-telling techniques, and has a beginning that hooks the viewer and sets up the story, a logical middle that builds to a good ending which brings the story to a memorable, strong close. These types of packages can be seen often in TV newscasts, especially on the network news. Longer forms of news packages can be found in news magazine shows like “20—20” and “Dateline.”

In Advanced Broadcast Writing, one of the core journalistic requirements for video is to be able to put together TV News Packages. Professionally, packages are varied in technique and type. However, for our program, we usually stick to a standard format. Unless told otherwise, TV News Packages in Advanced Broadcast Writing will consist of the following **6 elements**:

1. **B—Roll**---Video footage that matches up or reinforces narration, interviews, etc. (video that we see on-screen)
When a viewer watches our TV Packages, he/she should see mostly B-Roll.
2. **SOT (Sound on Tape)**---These are sound bites (actualities) from interviews. We usually see the interviewee on camera the first time he/she speaks. We might see the interviewee on camera again, however most of the time in our packages, we hear the SOT but see B-Roll that is relevant to what the person is saying.
3. **NatSOT (Natural Sound on Tape)**: Sound from “on-location” that matches up to your story....sound from the natural environment of your story.....(Example: In a story about the train station, you might have sound and possibly footage of a train rumbling along the tracks....)
4. **VO (VOICE-OVER)** The reporter’s vocal track which is the narration of the story. In this class, all of the narration by the reporter is done as a voice-over, except the stand up. In other words, all of the reporter narration will be heard, but the viewer will see B-Roll. The exception is when the reporter is seen AND heard in the one stand up (described below).
5. **Stand Up**---This is the only time our reporters appear on-camera. The stand up is when we see the reporter doing a short portion of the narration. This is usually used for a key part of the narration or for an important transition in the story.
6. **Graphics** (words, charts, pictures, etc.) These are used to identify speakers, locations, etc; graphics may also be used to better explain a concept, to provide “sub-text”, to provide statistics, etc.

REMINDER: Read the following pages for some tips, but be sure to consult with your teacher for more resources, including video samples.

SOME TIPS ON TV NEWS PACKAGES---1

from a former WWPBS student and former Northwestern University TV journalist,

and professional in the field: Gregg Carlstrom

1. News package stories have **4 elements**: **video, natural sound (NatSOT), sound from interviews(SOT), and the reporter's vocal track.**
2. **The process:**
 - Get a story or be assigned one.
 - Do some background **research.**
 - Line up interviews; **plan some questions and your purpose.**
 - (Since editing answers is tough, and there could be possible ethical problems, if necessary find ways to **“re-ask” the same question,** or ask specific **follow up questions** to make **sure you get good SOTs.**
 - After interview, **get B-Roll of the interview subject** (walking down the hall, typing on a computer, etc.) This is great for leading into interviews without having any “jump cuts.”
 - Get other B-Roll, if interview dictated any....
 - **B-Roll:**
 - More is good....
 - **Different angles** help....
 - Shoot **“sequences”** at different zoom levels (example: filming a wide shot of a street, then film a close-up of a particular person or sign or car (sequences in 3's are even better)....but do not zoom; instead in editing cut from wide shot to close-up, etc.
 - **“Action B-Roll”** looks better---if filming a building, filming it with people moving around or doing things is better than static shots of the building.
 - **NO CAMERA MOVEMENT** in B-Roll (generally **no zooms, no pans, no tilts,** etc.) It is better to edit in cuts rapidly between static shots.
 - **Editing:**
 - **Figure out** exactly what **SOT's you will use.**
 - **Time out the SOT's.** (helps you figure out time for narrations, etc.)
 - **Take down verbatims** from your SOT's. (prevents you from later echoing the SOT in your narration; also helps you figure out how to lead into and out of your SOT's.
 - **On editor, lay down the narration and SOT's,** and then **put B-Roll on top of the narration,** and **sometimes on top of the SOT's.**
 - **Standups:**
 - Have enough **separation between the reporter and the background.**
 - **Shot** should be **fairly tight.**
 - Reporter should be **far enough away from the background** that he does not blend in.
 - **Limited action** tends to look better in a standup—**a hand gesture, walking,** some limited movement.
3. **Think of your package as a whole,** rather than as individual shots. (For example, when your are shooting B-Roll, don't think of it as an individual piece; think about how it is going to **fit in with the overall goal of your story.**
4. Remember to **THINK SEQUENTIALLY:** (example: LS, MS, CU... If you film a street, maybe follow it up with a medium shot of traffic and a close-up of people walking...) Sequences of three work well.
5. **Don't let your viewers see your edits.** Make the package as **seamless** as possible, and that is where shooting sequentially comes in.
6. **Limit use of effects like dissolves,** even when editing. Effects, zooms, etc. are distracting from your story. Use them only when necessary, for instance to avoid a jump cut (like cutting from a shot of the interviewee at his desk to a SOT of him talking. Sometimes dissolves are also a smoother way of coming out of a graphic.
7. **Summing up:** interviews and script are key....**Be prepared and write well !!!!**

SOME TIPS ON TV NEWS PACKAGES---2

from a former WPPHS student and former Virginia Tech University college TV journalist,
and professional in the field: Towney Godfrey

1. **SELECT A VISUAL STORY:** Make sure your story has visual elements to it. Some stories that are great for radio wrappers won't work as TV packages because there aren't enough visual elements to the story. For example, let's say Plainsboro is doing some construction to re-vitalize the area. That's a great newspaper and radio story, but it wouldn't necessarily be the best TV news story because there's not a whole lot of video you can get for the package (beyond shots of the town).
2. **PREPARATION:** Once you have selected the story, prepare. **Remember the five P's: Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance.** Figure out the **Who, What, When, Where Why and how of the story.** Contact people and schedule interviews. If it's an event, read up on the event, try and contact someone and let them know you're coming (the last thing you want to do is blindside people by showing up at an event with a bunch of camera equipment when they're not expecting you...This could make the hosts of the event upset). Try to plan out the package as much as you can. You may not be able to storyboard it, but you can come up with a plan in your mind for where this story is going and what shots you will need.
3. **START SHOOTING.** Before you begin shooting, make sure all of your camera settings are right (white balance, focus, etc.). Make sure that the camera microphone is on; natural sound is very important. Make sure to properly frame everything you're shooting. While shooting, look for opportunities for sequences. While conducting your interviews, make sure that you do not have your subject looking directly into the camera. He/she should be looking at you, next to the camera.
4. **SCRIPT THE PACKAGE:** Once you have all of your footage and interviews done, put together a script. Make sure to have a lead and lead-ins, like for wrappers. Pick out what sound bytes you want to use for the story and **transcribe those bytes to your script.**
5. **RECORD YOUR VOICEOVERS:** Voice your story. Read professionally, vary pitch, delivery, intonation, etc. Use pauses, emphasize words or phrases (punch key phrases), etc.
6. **EDIT YOUR STORY.** When editing make sure you have natural sound throughout. Make sure the story flows, and that the footage (B-Roll) matches the voiceovers and SOT's. Make smooth transitions. TELL THE STORY as a STORY.....Have a good intro (a hook is needed)...have a structure to develop the middle of the story, plan a good ending, etc.) Good storytelling is crucial. Consider "personalizing" your story by focusing on a person that represents what your story is about (put a face on the story).
7. **USE PURE JOURNALISTIC TECHNIQUES:** Be **fair, balanced, objective,** etc. (You are NOT part of the story; you are the objective reporter who represents the audience).
8. Stay **HIGH ROAD AND PROFESSIONAL** at all times.
9. **QUALITY, SIMPLICITY, CLASS,** etc. Make sure you your video AND AUDIO are high quality. No matter how well you tell your story, your package is ruined if the video or audio is low quality. Be sure to have extra footage available, just in case.....**AVOID SPECIAL EFFECTS like WIPES.** They detract from your package and seem unprofessional and "cheesy." Graphics (CG) may be used for clarity, for identification, etc.
10. **GET SOME REST !!!!!**

SOME TIPS ON TV NEWS PACKAGES---3

**from a former WPPHS student and former Northwestern University TV journalist,
and professional in the field: Robert Moses**

Robert Moses
roberttmoses@gmail.com

Shooting:

-Avoid pans, tilts or zooms unless they accomplish something. For example, you might tilt the camera so your viewer gets a sense of how tall a building is.

-Shoot wide, medium and tight. You want to have enough shots to be able to edit in sequences. Shoot more b-roll than you think you'll need.

-When shooting interviews, have your subject look at you and not into the camera. Also, if you're doing a story about opposing sides, you can show your viewer that the sides are opposed by shooting interviews over opposite shoulders. For example, if you're doing a story about abortion, you might shoot pro-choice interviews over one shoulder and pro-life interviews over the other. Your viewers will be able to see that those with different views are actually facing different ways.

Writing:

-Write conversationally, but don't be afraid to add some flair!

-See it, say it: Make sure your video reinforces your writing, and vice versa.

-Your writing should guide the story. Allow your interview subjects to tell their stories themselves.

-A professor once told me: "**News is people, and people are news.**" When doing a story about a broad topic, make your viewers care by personalizing it. For example, instead of doing a broad overview piece about reactions to the Iraq war, you might focus on one family who has lost a son or daughter.

Editing:

-Take advantage of natural sound. Natural sound helps transport your viewers to where you are and it allows your package to breathe.

-Maintain a good pace with your shots. Don't stay on one shot for more than four or five seconds. If your story is about a fast-paced and exciting subject, your editing should reflect that.

-Avoid editing two shots together in such a way as to make the movement unnatural. For example, don't show a person with glasses in one shot and then show the same person without glasses in the next shot. (I have done this before!) This is known as a jump cut.

-Mostly avoid dissolves or wipes. I think it's best to just cut from one shot to the next.

Clearer, Stronger Writing

By [Al Tompkins](#)

(These points and much more can be found in a book written by Al Tompkins called:

Write for the Ear Shoot for the Eye AIM FOR THE HEART

A Guide for TV Producers and Reporters

Copyright: 2002 by Bonus Books

___1. Tell the story in three words or OTPS, one theme per story, one thought per sentence. Select, don't compress, what goes in your stories. The stuff that does not make it into the story will make great tags, follow ups, or additional material for Internet sites.

___2. Tell complex stories through strong characters. Readers and viewers will remember what they feel longer than what they know. Characters help me understand how the complex facts you uncovered affect people.

___3. Objective copy, subjective sound. Let the characters evoke emotions, express feelings, and give opinions in their soundbites. The journalists' copy should contain objective words, facts, and truths.

___4. Use active verbs, not passive ones. Consider the difference between "the gun was found" and "the boy found the gun." Ask "Who did what?" and you will write stronger and more informed stories.

___5. No subjective adjectives. Your lawyer and your viewers will thank you. No more "fantastic-unbelievable-gut wrenching" or "mother's worst nightmare."

___6. Give viewers a sense for the passage of time in your story. Make me feel you have spent some time by showing me the character in more than one setting, in more than one situation.

___7. Remember, leads tell me "so what," stories tell me "what" and tags tell me "what's next."

Notes and Quotes from book: Make it Memorable

(by Bob Dotson, NBC correspondent, Bonus Books, copyright 2000)

1. When interviewing, keep in mind techniques like, “the rule of threes,” “filling the silence,” and “the nonquestion question.”
2. Write the middle of your story first.
3. Find **strong central characters**.
4. **Show them what they might have missed, even standing next to you.**
 - **“Write to the corners of the picture”**: try to notice things the audience could not discover on its own; don’t waste time pointing out the obvious. Provide details that give meaning and context to the story. This gives the viewers more reasons to care.
5. Constantly check with your video crew to make sure they are working on the same storylines as you.
6. For longer pieces, strive to use the tools of a good novelist: scene setting, foreshadowing, conflict, character growth, resolution.
7. Put stories into context.
8. Do NOT just report. **Be a storyteller**. Storytelling begins with how the news **affects the viewer**. Look for the **compelling emotion**. **Build upon that central emotion**, not with descriptive writing, but **with strong images**.
9. Great stories have layers; they communicate on many levels. On the surface, there is the story you are reporting but beneath the surface are **strong images and sounds—picture and audio** designed to **help the viewer experience the story** rather than just learn about it.
10. **Highlight the universal elements**---love and hate; happiness and sadness—emotions that **interest the broadest group of viewers**. Give the viewer **hope**.
11. Do NOT overwhelm viewers with too much info. Instead, help them sort through the info, help them understand.
12. **Write to express, not to impress**. **Clarity and accuracy** create the foundation of all good news stories.
13. Look for little details that can be metaphors for what’s happening at a level that the viewer cannot see. Provide imagery (visually).
14. **Avoid weak, wimpy verbs**. “Is” is the dullest verb in the English language. Reach for words that do more, say more, enhance your copy. Strive for **active verbs (but not flowery adjectives...)**
15. **Be conversational**. When possible avoid jargon and clichés.
16. **Write in active voice**.
17. Write in threes. (Some use of this concept adds rhythm to your copy) (ie, red, white & blue;life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.)
18. Build into every story **a little surprise**—an abrupt natural sound, an unanticipated picture, or an unsuspected turn in the script.
19. Highlight a **story’s natural drama**. If you have to tighten your script, tighten it in other parts when you are just providing detail so you can let the natural drama play out.
20. Writing for a visual medium requires tight writing, with sentences strong enough to push the story along, but short enough to leave plenty of room for natural sound and pictures.
21. The **best sound bites** are the ones that will **stick in your memory**, that elicit **emotion**.
22. **The Game of “WHAT IF”**: As your story progresses, keep asking yourself, if I had to produce the story right now, what would be my opening shot? My closing shot? The point of my story? This will keep you focused. These things could change, but if you **keep your end in sight**, then you will construct a direct path for your audience, and not lose time shooting unnecessary footage or interviews.
23. **Before you start writing**, state in one complete sentence what you want the audience to learn from your story.
24. **Pictures are powerful storytelling tools**. Write them first. Think how the pictures should progress in your story. They must flow logically and smoothly, just as your words must flow logically and smoothly. Figure out your best picture to open the story. Figure out your most powerful picture to close the story. **Build your script around these images**.

25. The **middle of the story**: craft three to five points, which then should be supported visually, once you have identified them. Make them clear and sharp.
26. **The Standup** (reporter narrating on camera) often comes around the middle of the piece. It gives the viewer **information you can't visualize**; information that **transitions from one location to another**.
27. **How to end a story**: Find a strong visual image close whenever possible. This should be something you can build to throughout the story. It should be a memorable image, a picture you can't top. Then, help the viewer understand the story's meaning. Summarize the point of the piece with a precise closing line.
28. **STORY--THE BUILDING BLOCKS**:
 - **Words**—Each section of your story should have three ideas with just enough info to help them stick in a viewer's memory. Say nothing in the script your viewers already know or that the visuals say more eloquently.
 - **Pictures**—Throughout your report, build your story around sequences—two or three shots per sequence.
 - **Silence**—Stop writing occasionally. Allow compelling action to occur without voiceover.
 - **Natural Sound**—Use natural sound to heighten realism, authenticity, believability; to heighten the viewer's sense of vicarious participation in the events you are showing. Let the viewer experience what went on.
 - **Short Sound bites**—Short sound bites prove the story you are showing. Don't use long sound bites as substitutes for more effective storytelling.
 - **Graphics**—effective to illustrate complex ideas and story points without pictures, but don't overuse them. Are also used to identify speaker so it does not have to be stated.
 - **Reporter On-camera stand-ups**
 - **Logical editing, both visually and verbally**
29. **The "SO WHAT?" test**: Put the stories into context for the viewer. Find the telling detail that makes the story unique.
30. Ask yourself, "**What does this story mean?**"
31. Economize your shooting and your scripting. This will allow you more time in editing to work on a making the story meaningful, logical, etc.
32. You can't be effective in television unless you **master both reporting and storytelling**. Reporting is what you do to get a great story, but **stories are remembered only if you tell them well**.

VIDEO TIPS FROM former student TIM O'CONNOR⁽⁰⁸⁾

SHOOTING

- **The rule of thirds**: Always use the rule of thirds. It gives a cinematic feel to any video, and is more appealing to the eye.
- Natural cuts, and shooting as if editing
- **Angles that convey meaning**: Shooting from below conveys power and menace, shooting from above makes the subject look helpless or pitiful. From behind: a sense of mystery. A slightly crooked shot gives the sense that the subject is confused or insane.
- **Lighting**: Make sure there is lighting. If you do have access to some lamps, light the subject so that they stand out over the background.
- **Camera movements**: Move when necessity requires it. Too much camera movement is never good. Zooming is almost always bad. Tilts and pans are good for establishing scenes (Fargo does this), though they look awkward in the middle of a scene. Dollies should only be used during emotional or powerful parts of scenes.
- **Never cut too soon**: Always leave the camera rolling for longer than you think you should. It will help in editing. Also, try to more of a concept into a single shot.
- **Sound**: Keep in mind that what you hear at a shoot isn't what the camera hears. Bring headphones, and plug them into the jack. Try to get an external microphone for scenes with dialogue and record background noise in post-production. Move the camera away from creators of aggravating "ambient" sound (Air-conditioners, radiators, humming computers)
- **The "180" Line**: A shooting concept that states that the camera should always stay on one half of the subject it is shooting. Crossing the invisible line in front of actors changes the direction of the scene, and makes things confusing visually. If the line must be crossed, do so with a shot in which the camera physically moves over the line.
- **"Show" Don't "Tell"**: The best stories are told without any words. Before using dialogue exposition or graphics, try to think of ways to involve the audience in the story using only images.

EDITING

- **Cuts**: Cuts inside of scenes, transitions only between scenes (Or in montages or scenes showing the passage of time). To transition between major gaps of time, fade to black, and then back up.
- **Effects**: Are the essence of evil. They might seem appealing, but in actuality, they are quite unprofessional, and look like home video type deals. The only transitions that should be used between shots are simple dissolves. Except for very rare occasions with a strong purpose, avoid wipes. Video filters are also distracting and should be used very rarely or never, so that "special effects" remain "special."
- **Distance**: It is natural for the audience to see an object at a distance (A wide shot), get closer with a medium shot, and then go to the close up. Cutting from a very wide angle to a close-up is abrupt and should be avoided.
- **Duration of Takes**: If possible, get your actors to play out a scene for as long as they can. Rapid cutting often gets confusing and can be awkward. Try to stay on one shot before taking the next.
- Repetition is good, but not too much repetition. Variation in instrument choices and unique combinations usually turn out the best music.

TITLES:

- **FONT**: Nissan EFN
- **Color**: Black or White (Depending on the background color: light backgrounds should have black font, dark ones, white font)
- No shadow or 3D effects
- Titles should fade in and then fade out

Outro (Out-cue) for ALL PACKAGES (How to end):

- The standard "Outro" of the voiceover, or standup (if it falls at the end), must be:
"This has been _____ (Reporter's name) _____ for WWPB--TV."

Reporter's Checklist for TV News Packages

(edited excerpts from Make It Memorable by Bob Dotson, Bonus Books, copyright 2000)

Questions to ask yourself during every assignment:

- ___ 1. How can I make this a compelling story with **universal values** that **appeal to a wide audience**?
- ___ 2. Where can I find a strong opening (preferably a **visual lead**) that **instantly telegraphs the story to come**?
- ___ 3. Is my **writing strong, tight**, and **free of information that people already know**?
- ___ 4. Does the story **build to a close**?
- ___ 5. Are there **elements of surprise** within the visuals or sound to attract and hold viewers?
- ___ 6. Is the **subject matter interesting, concrete, important**? (not just a “fluff” piece)
- ___ 7. **SO WHAT?!?!?** Does the piece answer the “so what?” test? Does it address a larger issue/concern?
- ___ 8. Is the **story told through people engaged in compelling action that is visual** and picturesque?
Does the report **let people tell their own story** whenever possible?
- ___ 9. Did I **let the camera “talk”** for itself whenever possible? **Show rather than tell** !!!!
- ___ 10. Is my **camerawork steady**? Do I have **interesting angles**; **minimal use of pans and zooms**?
- ___ 11. Are my **on-camera appearances**, if any, **used appropriately** and **not** used to substitute for more compelling elements of the story?
- ___ 12. Do my **standup appearances** deliver information that helps **drive the story forward**?
- ___ 13. Are my voice-over narrations delivered with authority, spontaneity, feeling? Are they **tight, active voice, understandable, readable, listenable**?
- ___ 14. Does the soundtrack carry meaning that can help viewers create secondary visual images (subtext)?
- ___ 15. Is my audio crisp and clean? Am I **using** interesting **sound** and background sound and sound bites **to break up long narration**?
- ___ 16. Is the music, if any, appropriate to mood and content? (Always make sure you have rights to play music)
- ___ 17. Is my **lighting natural**? Can I use available light? Does it highlight what I want the viewer to notice?
- ___ 18. **EDITING:** Does my editing give the story **pace**? Are you building the story in **logical sequence**? Am I matching its action? Does it cut **smoothly from wide shot to close up**?
Do my **soundtracks overlap smoothly**? No dead air? **Do I have a picture or graphic to cover everything I need to say**?

AND A MESSAGE FROM BOB DOTSON: “Sometimes the answer to those questions will be ‘No,’ or ‘Not much.’” We all have hands dealt us every day, because shorter deadlines and increasing story counts have us working faster and longer.
Just remember---**success in this business does not depend on being dealt a good hand.**
It’s **playing the bad hand well**, over and over again.