

Block

3

WRITING FOR THE MEDIA

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In this Block, entitled **Writing for the Media** we have ventured into the area of writing scripts for radio, TV and the new media. We've spelt out some basic rules about scriptwriting for electronic media.

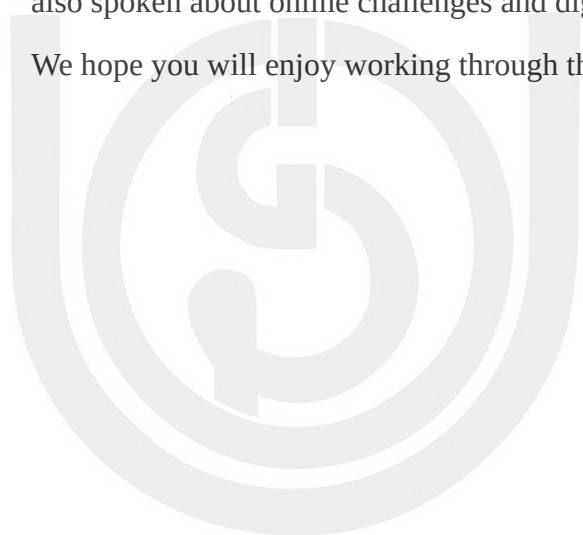
In **Unit 1** we've spoken about radio as a medium of mass communication and described the techniques of scripting for Radio.

In **Unit 2** we've spoken about the characteristics and language of television. We've also given you rules about how to write scripts for TV ads and PSAs. Along with this we've also discussed the basic techniques of writing for children.

Unit 3 is entitled **Understanding New Media** and we've spoken about what exactly comes under the umbrella term "new media" and how it has opened new windows of opportunity for writers wishing to make a career in writing for this field.

Unit 4 is entitled **Writing for New Media** and we have explored how platforms like Blogging, Facebook, Twitter offer opportunities for content writing. We've also spoken about online challenges and digital ethics.

We hope you will enjoy working through this Block.



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UNIT 1 RADIO

Structure

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- 1.9 Summing Up
- 1.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

After a study of this unit, you will be able to:

- define the nature and characteristics of radio as a medium of mass communication;
- state the basics of radio programming for entertainment, instruction and public utility announcements;
- understand the rudiments of writing for radio;
- understand how to use narration, SFX and music in radio scripts and
- write scripts for broadcast.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Of the various modes of mass communication, radio is still the most immediate and widespread in India. Take for example, a major train accident. If it has occurred after 0100 hrs, at night, it will be known to readers of newspapers the morning after next, that is, two days later or after about 30 hours. But it would go in an external news bulletin of AIR within an hour, if an agency report on the accident lands in the general news room in New Delhi instantly. Thus, as a medium of mass communication, radio is faster and has the most widespread reach.

Another advantage of radio is its mobility. Modern-day transistors are small and portable; they can be carried everywhere — to a factory or a field, and even to the toilet as one shaves, or does one's morning chores. Besides, radio is inexpensive and is within the reach of almost all people. It is easy to operate and can be switched on at any place even outside the home. We see transistors on a pedlar's pushcart or on the footpath where the vegetable vendors and cobblers stack up their wares for sale. It can be slung on a bicycle handle or carried while walking to and from the office.

1.2 SUBSTANCE OF RADIO PROGRAMMING

Radio-programming is essentially based on auditory values of the content of the programme. Let us briefly glance at radio-programming for providing entertainment, information, instruction of education and at the basics of commercial broadcast and public utility announcements.

1.2.1 Entertainment

It is not easy to separate entertainment from information or education. For example, film-songs which ostensibly entertain, also educate a deep and careful listener about the trends and socio-economic milieu through the words of the song. While programming entertainment broadcasts, certain things are kept in mind. The first is the quality of entertainment which in a mass unrestrictable listening, should be of good taste and not smack of communal, casteist, chauvinist or any other kinds of bias. In a free society like ours, which is often prone to communal, ethnic and secessionist violence, entertainment matter for radio broadcast has to be carefully chosen. The matter can be of mass appeal, like film-songs over Vividh Bharati, or of restricted, even elitist/specific interest like Hindustani Classical, or Western Classical music, or high-level informative programmes like 'Spotlight' and 'Current Affairs'.

1.2.2 Information

The major information broadcasts from every radio station are the news-based programmes which are very popular. Strictly speaking "what makes information" varies from person to person. To a News Executive of AIR, for example much of the newscast from AIR is no information, because he is steeped in it; while news from the BBC may be very informative to him. A midday women's programme may be very informative to rural women, but to a socialite, urban woman, it may sound elementary.

The infrastructure for news-gathering, editing compiling and reading is elaborate and expensive in every radio organization. Programmes of information broadcasts have to keep their content clear and direct, free of all emotional or editorial comment. The information should be authentic, verifiable and given in a manner that does not lead to a social or law-and-order turmoil. For example, the immediate announcement of the death-toll in a communal clash or a police-action in a partisan or provocative tone, in a sensitive situation, can aggravate it further.

1.2.3 Commercials

Commercial advertising was started on AIR on 01 November, 1967, to boost the revenues of the organization, by promoting goods and services in the private sector. Planning of commercial advertising over radio calls for mature auditory imagination and grasp of the essentials of advertising—like an attractive slogan, an arresting sound or anecdote and subtlety in bringing in the product and its merits. It is different from advertising in print and audio-visual media like TV, video and cinema, for the absence of visuals needs to be more than made up by a striking use of slogans and sound-effects.

1.2.4 Instruction/Education

A thin margin distinguishes instruction from education. Instruction is a more immediate input than education and affects the surface of the mind, while education goes a little deeper and is a never-ending process. Radio offers both instruction and education to its listeners through a variety of spoken-word-programmes. Both are more than information and less than wisdom or elevation. A listening farmer can be **instructed**, for example, about how to handle a new agricultural tool but he needs to be educated about pest control. Wisdom about mechanization of agriculture grows slowly after years of introspection and analysis. The virtues of natural farming can be absorbed in an elevated state of mind which is the final and the deepest state among the five processes, namely information, instruction, education, wisdom and elevation.

Radio programming about instruction and education has to be predominantly verbal, although sound-effects can be employed imaginatively. An instructional programme about repairing a motor engine, for instance, can be illustrated by various sounds of the engine in a healthy and sick state. These programmes need to be utterly objective and repeated over a period of time to drive home a complex lesson; they have also to be simple in structure.

1.2.5 Public Service Announcements

Public Service or utility announcements are increasing over radio as the society becomes more complex and listeners crave for various kinds of information. Vacancies in government offices and notices of mass recruitment have become popular over radio, as these somewhat contribute to easing the unemployment situation. Railway and airline flight-timings about departure and arrivals over the radio relieve the anxiety of passengers, friends and relatives. These are of informational value and have no value beyond the moment. The names of casualties in train and air accidents, when announced over radio, serve an immediate social purpose. Programming public service announcements presupposes authentic, factual and correct information as well as unemotional and prompt delivery.

Similarly public service campaigns on social issues such as family welfare, health care, hygiene, dowry, immunization etc., broadcast over radio have great utility value. Through the use of apt slogans, jingles, dramaticules, and appropriate dialogues, these social issues can be highlighted and thus provoke social awareness among a large majority of listeners.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Is there any need to carefully choose even entertainment matter for broadcast in present-day India?

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- ii) How are commercial broadcasts over AIR different from entertainment programmes? Give examples.

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- iii) What is the difference between instruction and education in respect of radio programmes? Exemplify.

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- iv) What purpose is served by Public Service Announcements over a radio system?

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(Check your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.)

1.3 WRITING FOR RADIO

Writing for radio is very different from writing for any other medium, particularly the print medium. Many good writers of books and newspaper articles have fared badly when called upon to write for, or speak on the radio. On the contrary, many good writers or speakers on radio have done equally well in the print medium; George Orwell, Dylan Thomas, Rudyard Kipling are well known examples

1.3.1 Broadcasting Demands on the Writer

The difference between a writer for radio and one for the print medium lies in the recognition and understanding of the sound-values of letters, words and sentences. A Dickensian sentence may read extraordinarily well in print but if it is too long or full of multisyllable words, or is of a complex syntax, it will fall flat on the radio listeners.

The style and content of a script for the radio are dictated, to a large extent, by the potential listeners. For example, a writer of a talk for housewives, say on

cooking or bringing up children, for midday listening, has to be extremely simple and yet has to present the subject in a chatty and interesting way to keep the listeners off their siesta. If he/she does it like an article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, listeners will naturally switch off, or change to another programme. Although good writing for radio is learnt by years of patient practice and by development of what T.S. Eliot called, the ‘auditory imagination’, some simple rules—do’s and don’ts—can perhaps be laid down. These are:

- a) Think about the subject and digest the material in all its aspects before putting it down in writing.
- b) Imagine your potential listeners to be sitting next to you in real life and write as you would speak to them as if they were listening to you in actual life.
- c) Avoid difficult words; if you have to present complex ideas, explain them in the simplest terms before repeating them.
- d) Maintain a rigid time-frame and adjust your writing to the slot given to you.
- e) Adjust your writing to the mood of the day, the time and the season. For example, if you are doing a talk on sports in the peak evening hours, make it interesting, conversational and jovial to appeal to the widest section of listeners.

Writing for radio should preferably be typed, or neatly hand-written, so that neither you nor the reader fumbles in the studio. For adjusting to the time-slot, the talk can be rehearsed at home before recording it at the radio station. Although spellings are not very important in radio-writing, one should be careful, because sometimes good broadcasts are sent out for publication.

Below are given two passages, exemplifying good and bad writing for the radio.

1.3.2 Good and Bad Writing

Here is an example of **good writing** for radio.

“Dust thou art, to dust returnest” says the Bible. Scientifically, it is however, more appropriate to say, “Man is water and to water he returns”, because according to Charles Darwin, man evolved from simple, unicellular forms, floating on water, called PROTOZOA; two-thirds of his body is watery substance. When after death, he is either buried or cremated, the mortal remains merge with water in the soil; in some communities the lifeless body is still surrendered to a flowing river. While he is alive, he cannot live without water for long; water in fact is an alias of life. Curiously, as in the human body, water comprises two-thirds of the earth’s surface also, to be precise, 72 per cent; and in chemical analysis, blood plasma in human or animal body has the same saline content as sea-water; it is almost captured sea-water. Water is not only the medium of food for plants and trees, it is also a staple food for man and animals.

Bad Writing

The recognition that no amount of investment in power, irrigation, transport and communication will improve the well-being of our people if they remain unlettered, led to the formal launching of National Adult Education Programme in 1978. The programme aimed at combining literacy, functionality and awareness.

Rural functional literacy projects and State adult education programmes were taken up with the active involvement of voluntary agencies to achieve the objectives of this societal responsibility. Parallel efforts were on to achieve rapid universalisation of primary education so as to check the rapid additions to the ranks of adult illiterates.

In the first example, sentences are divided into short statements marked by semicolons. The reader pauses at these divisions indicated by the punctuation marks. The vocabulary is simple and easily comprehensible. In the second example, the sentences are long; there is an irritating use of the passive voice in the first and third sentences; words like “unlettered”, “functionality” make the script difficult to listen to and comprehend simultaneously.

1.3.3 Radio Scripting—An Art of the Imagination

A radio script can be of various kinds—a radio play, an illustrative talk punctuated with sound-effects, a straight talk on an educational cultural, social or economic topic. This variety of scripts demand from the writer, very different kinds of treatment and approach. A script for a radio play is perhaps the most difficult to write and inexperienced playwrights can prove failures. A playwright for the stage finds himself constricted while writing a play for the radio; there is no stage for the viewers to see; no dramatis personae are seen; no action or spectacular scene can be conveyed in physical terms. In fact, apart from the voices of the personae there are only sound-effects to compensate for the absence of visual communication. Music can play a great part, as it does on stage. The playwright for the radio has to imagine his play in only one dimension—that of sound—and has to make the listeners oblivious to the absence of visuals. A good play helps the listeners to imagine the scene. The listeners of a radio play accept the limitation of the lack of visuals but if their expectations from the play are not fulfilled by compensatory sound effects, the script does not succeed. Similarly, scripts for talks, commentaries and illustrative narrations have to be auditorily sound, that is, fit for listening within a rigid time-frame. Imagination comes into play in devising a proper structure—a striking beginning, a patient elaboration of the idea contained in the script and a convincing conclusion.

Check Your Progress 2

- (i) What are the techniques involved in producing a radio play?

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(Check your answer with that given at the end of this Unit.)

1.4 THE SPOKEN LANGUAGE

Writing for broadcasting is actually writing for the ear. Therefore, it is important to understand how the script will sound. A scriptwriter should make a practice of reading his/her script aloud while writing.

1.4.1 The Sound of Normal Speech

Scriptwriters should have a very good sense of what normal speech sounds like and get away from the confines of written speech. Even though a writer may not reproduce normal speech on radio, s/he would want her/his characters to sound like real people. It is not only the business of dramatists to make their characters sound real but also of the presenters and commentators. The skill of sounding normal has a lot to do with the writer's knowledge of the devices at his disposal. The use of the active voice, for instance : it is more direct and vigorous to say: "I shall always remember my first visit to Calcutta" than "my first visit to Calcutta will always be remembered by me".

1.4.2 Informal Words

Everyday speech abounds in short, informal, colloquial words. Though elegant and formal words may be chosen to describe, say for instance, an ornate personality, a habitual use of them would sound stiff and studied, if not pompous. Avoid fancy words like *beauteous*, *curvaceous* and *discombobulate*. Even the most eloquent person is likely to use short and simple words when engaged in conversation. If you read interviews of famous writers and scholars, you will find that there is a prevalence of simple words and colloquialisms in their speech. They usually restrict the use of long, complicated specialized terms to their textbooks and scholarly monographs. When speaking, it is likely that a scholar would refer to a rose as "beautiful" than remark that it was "full of pulchritude".

1.4.3 Contractions

The use of contractions is important for the scriptwriter. In ordinary conversation, we do not say that "I am going", "I could not do that", "You did not tell me", etc., but rather, "I'm going", "I couldn't do that", "You didn't tell me". However, there are occasions when the use of non contracted expressions is deliberate. When emphasis is sought, for example, "I do not", sounds more forceful than "I don't". The non contracted form, in addition, may be used to characterize the affected or pedantic person or to introduce a special quality into the dialogue.

1.4.4 Simple Sentences

A third requirement is to use short and simple sentences. Again, as mentioned above, the writer must be well aware of elementary rules of usage that help to simplify expression. Definite assertions sound better than tame, colourless, hesitating, non-committal language. Therefore, the sentence, "He did not think studying Latin was a sensible way to use one's time" sounds more definitive when expressed in the positive form. "He thought the study of Latin, a waste of time".

1.4.5 Incomplete Sentences

A fourth way to suggest the sound of normal speech is to use incomplete sentences when necessary. People, engaged in every day conversation, often start a sentence, forget what they were going to say, or feel that their meaning is obvious, and break off in the middle, or more likely, they are interrupted by some one else. The device of broken sentences or the interrupted line helps to give a conversational quality to dialogue or narration. A simple response like "....

Sure” or “of course” to a question like “Do you think politicians manipulate the electorate?”, sounds more conversational than “Yes, I certainly believe so”.

1.4.6 Dialogue and Character

Dialogue writing makes use of all the devices above and more. Dialogue is the scriptwriter’s most important tool of revealing character. In developing character, the writer must avoid putting anything into the lines that will be inconsistent with the character who speaks them. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* revolves around the Prince of Denmark who is a victim of conflicting emotions. He wants to avenge the death of his father but cannot bring himself to kill the murderer. Unable to free himself from this web of conflicts, he contemplates suicide. The monologue that Shakespeare writes, amply articulates this dilemma: “To be or not to be, that is the question...”. It would have sounded pretty odd if Hamlet came out of his chamber saying “I know what I’ll do ...I’ll kill them off!”

Dialogue should be carefully scripted to carry vital information. Most dialogues should be purposefully designed to reveal character, advance the story or highlight the theme. Another important attribute of dialogue is **economy**. The writer must avoid the usage of jargon and verbiage and use dialogue effectively to distill the essence of his subject matter or his characters. When characters represent specific occupations, come from certain well defined regions or live in a time period different from the present, their speech must reflect these conditions. Doctors, for instance, are likely to use a very different language when they speak among themselves. In their language, stiff neck is referred to as myositis, indigestion as gastroenteritis and shortsightedness as myopia. Terms like these give the dialogue of the physicians an authenticity.

Writing dialects is an extension of this problem of finding the authentic terms and style. It is important for the scriptwriter **to research well into local phrases and styles, preferably with someone who belongs there**. Very often, problems begin when scriptwriters begin writing what they think dialects sound like.

The use of dialects can be a comment on character as well. It gives us an idea of where the character comes from: her/his background, etc. The play and musical *My Fair Lady* uses change in dialect to depict the evolution of a common flower-girl Eliza Doolittle into a sophisticated young woman. However, do not use dialect unless you are a devoted student of the tongue and are absolutely confident of reproducing it. If you use dialect, be consistent and economical. An overuse of different dialects will only serve to confuse the listener.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Given below is an extract from a radio-talk. Read it closely and try to rewrite it to achieve clarity.

Yet one cannot but raise the question of how far these post-Festival increases in tourism and trade can be ascribed to the Festivals and how far to other factors operating alongside, such as a greater interest in third world countries, the fact that, as one foreign visitor put it, as other destinations get exhausted or put out of bounds due to political troubles, one decides that ‘instead of a fun holiday in the Bahamas let’s get serious and “do” India’ with more than a nod due here in the direction of Attenborough, *Jewel in the Crown et al* for

sparkling the interest, the fact that there are more packages and tours operation to India than before and, in the case of trade, to a change in economic policies.

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(Check your answer with that given at the end of this Unit.)

1.5 NARRATION

Narration plays an important part in radio. The use of narration in film and television has receded sharply because in visual forms it is not necessary to describe what is happening. Narration therefore, has still its widest use in radio.

The major function of narration is that it conveys information to an audience more economically than dialogue. There are three main functions of narration. They are:

- i) Narration, first and foremost, can provide exposition; it can look backward and provide information about the past.
- ii) Similarly, it can move ahead and throw light on the future. It can collapse and convey a large amount of information very economically. Narration also serves to reinforce. Providing information or interpretation through narration can reinforce the message and thereby enhance the impact of the situation. One must also bear in mind that at no point should the narrator overstate. Too much of reinforcement should be used with great discrimination.
- iii) Thirdly, narration can be the vehicle for the **writer's own comment** on the issue. Though observations like this may enrich the meaning of the programme, an overdose of gratuitous and unnecessary comment will inevitably dull the impact. Besides this, narration can have a **filtering effect** by capsuling incidents, situations and dramatizations which, if presented straight, can result in being excessive and unbearable. In the 'Mahabharata' directed by Peter Brooke, the narration often performs a filtering function. At the end of the great war between the royal families, when the Kauravas are completely routed and with Duryodhana defeated in battle, Ashwathaman (a warrior in the Kaurava army) goes out at night and sets the Pandava camp on fire. The slaughter of the sleeping Pandvas is a brutal episode full of blood and gore. Instead of depicting the actual incident Brooke get Ashwathaman to confess his crime to a dying Duryodhana in the battlefield. This way, we **hear** of the incident and are spared the actual violence.

The most important thing to remember while writing a narration is that it should be made **an integral part of the script design**. Narration should be built into the structure of the script. The narration should retain the flavor of spoken

language. All the rules that apply to writing the dialogue also apply here. It must never become cumbersome or pretentious. Take for instance, the opening lines of Satyajit Ray's documentary film on Rabindranath Tagore, "On August 7, 1941, in the city of Calcutta, a man died. His mortal remains perished but he left behind a heritage no fire could consume". In three simple sentences Ray is able to hint at the passing of an era. Note also the gradual disclosure; this provides a build-up. Who is this man who died? This build-up would have been absent, had Ray said, 'Rabindranath Tagore died on August 7, 1941'. Narration must have the quality of the spoken word. Moreover, it should fit the mood and character of the programme.

1.6 RADIO'S LACK OF VISUALS

In film or television much of the narration is done by visuals. Therefore, it is enough to have narration mention the significance of the action and not the action itself. In radio, however, the narration, dialogue or commentary has to describe the action as well. It would be terribly dull if the radio went on to describe everything like a book! Description of the action or situation has to be implied within the dialogue or narration. Shakespeare, for instance, to remedy the lack of stage props on the Elizabethan stage, would take the aid of "scene painting". When Macbeth (in the play of the same name), hallucinating a dagger after committing murder, exclaims: "Is this a dagger which I see before me, The handle toward my hand?", we know what he has seen. Shakespeare goes on to describe Macbeth's futile attempt to clutch the dagger, without resorting to narration, by continuing the monologue: "Come let me clutch thee. I have thee not,". Thus writing for radio, often demands "**Scene Painting**". This means building 'visuals' into dialogue and this is an effective dramatic device. In a documentary or feature, the narrator would be expected to supply the visuals. It may not be enough to state that "students went on a strike today". It may be visualized for the listener by mentioning that the "the campus today wore a deserted look with students having gone on a strike".

All forms of visual communication have the advantage of communicating with or without sound. Radio, however, begins with nothing at all except absolute silence. No curtains are raised, no lights flashed onto the screen. To this utter emptiness in radio, the scriptwriter adds sounds, settings, period, mood and character.

In radio the scriptwriter prompts you, the listener, to apply your own imagination to the setting and characters. In this way, radio has the capacity to paint pictures, bigger and more fantastic, than those on the screen. Have you seen Hollywood science-fiction films like *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*? Or, mythologicals like *Ben Hur* and *Cleopatra*? If you have, you will understand the time, money and effort spent in recreating the setting and characters. In radio, all that would be unnecessary. Moreover, because radio programmes take place in the minds of the listeners, one could have any setting or character without anyone complaining that it was not what s/he had visualized it as. You could have Tipu Sultan, for instance, without anyone complaining that, "that is not the way he looked". What you would require, however, is an understanding of what is radio. In other words, a complete comprehension of how visual and literary

codes can be translated into auditory codes, that is, words. What becomes imperative thereby, is a competent grasp over the use of words.

1.7 SOUND EFFECTS (SFX)

In a radio script, sound effects (which are usually denoted by the **symbol SFX**) play a very essential role. Where radio lacks in visuals, the sound effects supply the need.

There are a number of ways in which SFX can be described. One useful way to classify them is according to the function they perform. First, action sounds. Mostly, sound is created through movement or action. The sound produced thereby is an effective indication of the situation. Advancing footsteps may denote an entry. Retreating footsteps may denote an exit. The clock striking indicates the time. Tapping of a cane may denote a blind man and so on. Action sounds may also describe the mood of the situation. A door slamming shut may indicate anger or someone humming or whistling may indicate a sense of lightheartedness.

Ambient sound, on the other hand, suggests the locale and setting. Take for instance, the production of radio drama. The lovers are at the railway station and are about to part. How would you convey it's a railway station? Surely you can't have your characters say, "Here, in the station..." and so forth. A narrator may sound equally silly. Your best bet is to use ambience. The sound of voices, trains hooting, trains running and feet shuffling create an ambience that is very typical. The dialogues spoken against a background of this ambience will give you what you want.

As a scriptwriter you will have to use a lot of discretion regarding the use of sound. Too few may make your production insipid while too many is quite likely to distract. SFX should be woven into the script in such a way that it does not stand out or draw attention to itself. Needless piling of one SFX on top of another will not only clutter the script but introduce complications both in terms of production and aesthetics. You must ask:

- Does the sound help clarify something?
- Does it add to authenticity?
- Does it create mood or enhance it?
- Does it fit in naturally or does it sound forced?

Finally, remember that silence is a very effective sound-effect too!.

1.8 MUSIC FOR RADIO

Music serves the function of being a powerful aid in reinforcing the emotional effect of a drama. The following are the most common uses of music in radio:

- i) As a signature or theme for a drama series or for a particular drama,
- ii) As a transition between scenes and indicating beginnings or ends,
- iii) As a background to scene or narration,

- iv) As part of the narration itself, (For instance, dialogue at a wedding with the band playing in the background).
- v) As a stab or sting at critical junctures in the dramatic development, and
- vi) To create mood.

Music makes significant contribution in radio but must be used with great discretion. Moderation and selection are of utmost importance. Background music in radio needs particular caution. Very often, students tend to use well-known pieces of composition and audience attention is completely carried away by them. When someone listens to your background music and says “how beautiful”, you blew it! Your background music should never come to the foreground. It should enrich, enhance or reinforce, but never steal the show!

Suitability is an important factor. Does the music fit the subject? Today conventional ideas are being challenged. No rule is carved on stone. We don’t have to use stringed instruments for tragedy and percussion for comedy. But the business of ‘fit’ still remains equally valid. The music of Pink Floyd (a rock band) is not likely to go well with a programme on traditional Indian puppets!

Avoiding overkill is equally important. The director may get so carried away with the music that it may drown everything else. Technically, at the production level, the director must keep a strict watch of the audio levels. The music level should be much lower than that of narration, dialogue, conversation or whatever.

1.9 SUMMING UP

The following learning points have been discussed in the unit:

- Radio-writing is primarily writing for the ear.
- A radio scriptwriter must go for simplicity and clarity.
- Creative writing implies new presentation. It is not important to come up with new ideas so much as being able to present old ideas in a new way.
- The skill of the scriptwriter involves using informal expressions and dialogues.
- Narration plays an important part in radio. It functions to: provide exposition, reinforce, make observations and have a filtering effect.
- Radio has devices to compensate for the lack of visuals. Narration, dialogue, sound-effects, and music, all play an important part to scene-paint for the listener.

1.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Yes—where there is mass, unrestrictable listening, entertainment programmes should be of good taste, without any communal, casteist or chauvinist bias.
- ii) Commercials are geared to advertising of their products by different commercial organizations. Hence the focus is not always on excluding

entertainment programmes. Often advertisement jingle and slogans intrude into the entertainment programme.

- iii) Instruction is of an immediate impact while education is a never-ending process. Instruction on a radio programme thus has the immediate range of vision for its field while education is of a far reaching and wider range of vision. Radio can instruct the audience about the use of contraceptives but when it comes to discussing the merits of a family planning programme, its value is educative.
- iv) PSAs highlight social issues and provoke social awareness among listeners.

Check Your Progress 2

- (i) Sound-effects, music interludes, background music, careful dialogues that will reveal the location, personality of the characters and conflict of the play are some of the techniques involved in a radioplay production.

Check Your Progress 3

(i) Hints:

- a) Break up into four sentences,
- b) See that each sentence is linked logically and grammatically to the previous one,
- c) You will need to change certain words and phrases as well as introduce some new ones into the passage

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UNIT 2 T.V.

Structure

- 2.0 Aims and Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Characteristics of TV
 - 2.2.1 Idea is Media
 - 2.2.2 The Language of Television
- 2.3 Types of Programmes
 - 2.3.1 TV and Entertainment
 - 2.3.2 TV and Information
 - 2.3.3 TV and Education
- 2.4 Formats for TV Scripts
- 2.5 TV Ads
 - 2.5.1 Structuring a TV Ad
- 2.6 Public Service Announcement
 - 2.6.1 Scripting a PSA
- 2.7 TV Writing for Children
 - 2.7.1 Preparing the Script
- 2.8 Summing Up
- 2.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we will introduce you to the characteristics and language of television. This will enable you to look at current TV programmes critically and analytically which will further enable you to write scripts for TV. The elements to watch out for would be —idea or concept, script structure and development of content, flow of dialogues and the build-up of sequences of the storyline.

By the end of this Unit you will be able to:

- visualize a TV advertisement and provide a script for it
- write scripts for public service announcements and
- learn to prepare scripts for children’s programmes.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Television has been derisively called the idiot box. It is also known as the tube, the telly, simply ‘TV’ and by many other such names. Some of these names and definitions have a pejorative connotation, some others—grudgingly admiring. But, almost universally, we are still a bit overawed by the technology which brought moving pictures into our houses for collective viewing. We still regard this box as something of a visual oracle. Whether we are complaining or

complacent at times, we still do not turn off our sets. It is a habit hard to beat and we follow it like zombies, unthinking, automatic. The term 'idiot box' has stuck and it will perhaps never come unstuck. We have come to regard the box as a thing that cannot lie; for is not seeing, believing?

It has grown rapidly into a prime communication medium in just over half a century, creating its own grammar and identity in the wake of its phenomenal growth. In some countries, TV is controlled by the government, while in others, it has been given to private organizations. But, all in all, TV has become a major medium of mass communication all over the world.

2.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF TV

TV production involves a number of steps. You must conceive of an idea and work out the gradual development of that idea. But conception and development of any idea for a TV programme will prove a failure, if one does not know whether the idea will be effective on the TV screen. Hence it is axiomatic for anyone involved with TV scripting to know the characteristics of TV before commencing his/her script. Let us list out some of the fundamental characteristics of TV:

Television programmes are shown on a TV set. The set is a small screen and has room for only close-up, detailed stories and action. It cannot accommodate large canvasses comfortably.

TV can delve into intricate details of subjects and characters over a period of time through serials and series.

TV time is commercially very expensive. Plots and storylines which move at a fast pace and are short in duration are commercially viable.

TV, because of its preference for close-up, enhances and focuses strongly on gestures and facial expressions.

TV, again because of its close-up shots of people/actors, lends itself to close identification with them. The build-up of each character when you write a TV play script should be strong, clear and believable to the audience.

2.2.1 Idea Vs Media

TV is an audio-visual medium. It is heard and seen. An idea is only as good as your reaction to it.

Writers often have one of two problems confronting them "What shall I write about?" or "Which shall I write about first?" some people tend always to be facing the first question; many professional writers are tortured by the second; but there are times when both sorts of writers are faced with one or the other difficulty. Finally you have to select one in particular. Try it out on other people and once you have convinced yourself about its feasibility, write it, don't abandon it midway. Generally speaking, it is very wise to insist upon seeing a work through to the end, even if one has to force oneself to do so. It is this habit which, above all others, distinguishes the professional writer from the would-be variety. Sometimes you may be given a specific brief which you will have to research and develop creatively. Once you have made up your mind about what

you are going to write, follow these steps; it may aid you to develop a systematic approach.

- First the idea of the topic has to be concrete (you can't write if you are vague about the central concept).
- Then consult and collate all available audio-visual and print material and possible references (secondary research).
- Interview characters if necessary to get a “feel” (indepth) of your subject matter. Sift through their experiences, perspectives, knowledge, feelings, dreams, fantasies (primary research).
- Now, sift your material—visual and sound—and write a short summary of what you have felt or understood. Consult a few people to get a feedback.
- Write the script. Try and capture the tone of your concept. Develop imaginatively the feeling, the flavor, the kind of presentation you want to give to the finished programme.

2.2.2 The Language of Television

To write a script for television it is important that you understand that the new mass media—film, radio and TV—have developed new languages; their grammars are still developing, their full potential as yet unknown. Each codifies realities differently. Linguists tell us it is possible to say anything in any language if you use enough words or images but in the new mass media, time is a major constraint. Of the new languages TV comes closest to drama. It combines music and art, language and gestures, rhetoric and colour. It favours simultaneity of visual and auditory images. Camera focuses not on speakers but the person spoken to or about; the audience hears the accuser but watches the accused. In a single impression it hears the prosecutor, watches the moving hands of the clock and sees the moral indignation of the judge. This is real drama in progress. TV is a tiny box into which people and events are crowded, for example, in sitcoms (situation comedies) and teleplays. The huge film screen is perfectly suited for larger than life social dramas and spectacles; in contrast, the TV screen has room for two, at the most three, faces, comfortably. In television, the scriptwriter and director can dig into the most humble, ordinary relationships of people. The incredibly complicated details of human relationships and small but significant real-life incidents are substances of good television drama. The deeper you probe into and examine the twisted, semi-formed complexes of emotional entanglements, the more exciting is the script. The boxed in quality of TV lends itself to static literary tragedy with greater ease than does the elastic, expandable movie.

2.3 TYPES OF PROGRAMMES

2.3.1 TV and Entertainment

What is entertainment in TV? Programmes such as soap operas (serials), game-shows (quiz etc.,) sports, crime and spy-story films are entertainment programmes.

Almost everyone watches these programmes; indeed today they are one of the most popular subjects of conversation. Tabloid newspaper articles relentlessly describe the lives of TV stars.

Entertainment programmes on TV mean excitement and excitement has necessarily to be in a fast pace. Conflict becomes more important than a balanced view of the world. The attempt is continually to seduce, capture and manipulate the minds of the audience, not to allow them to think for themselves, to present them with a clear-cut world view.

Entertainment programmes touch, very cleverly and ostensibly, every issue which affects public life and the contradictions of modern society. It is important for all regimes and elites in power to seek to obtain the consent, however passive, for their subjects. Every regime needs to be “seen” to justify itself to its people, and to the outside world, of its fairness and openness. What is being achieved through TV programme formats, is not exploitation but manipulation of society’s passive acceptance of all that is viewed on the screen. The entertainment format in TV coopts the producers and viewers. It camouflages all the pains, ills, contradictions and exploitation of society. The elites have realized that they cannot go on accumulating wealth unless they accumulate the power to manipulate the minds of the many. It has become clear to the mind manipulators that TV arouses strong emotional reactions in those who watch it or discuss it.

2.3.2 TV and Information

News is supposed to be the most truthful and “objective part” of television — a status that gives news special importance in television’s image of itself. It could be argued that the point at which television got the better of the newspapers as the main source of distributing news, marked an important shift in the role of the medium.

The presentation of news is, therefore, of the utmost importance for television institutions. Indeed, it often seems that there is a direct link between the authoritativeness of television channels, and the authoritativeness of their presenters. The presenters use a particular style in their presentation so that they are immediately identifiable with the institution. They have to make the news seem neutral: the news must have a flavor of immediacy and urgency. In actual fact, the news, like the rest of television, is the result of careful processes of selection and editing. Prevailing ideas of newsworthiness will deem some stories important, and others less so. None of the complexities will be visible in the programme itself; instead it is the job of the newsreader to present the so called objective truth, without showing any trace of emotion or personal bias.

2.3.3 TV and Education

One of the main objectives for introducing Television in India was to promote educational programmes. The intention was to broadcast educational and awareness programmes for farmers, villagers, the urban poor, with emphasis on special categories such as youth, women, physically handicapped, and the old. TV programmes were meant to address the sections of society which have traditionally been at a disadvantage and remained under-educated. Scripting for educational programmes can be challenging and interesting. Educational

programmes have very clearly stated objectives which have to be understood at the outset by the scriptwriter. The scriptwriter has to be first conceptually clear about the main points of instruction. Once the concept is clear the writer can creatively develop his/her script – in any one of the following formats:

- a programme format which is linear with an authoritative statement of facts
- a question-answer programme format which may end with a discussion, summing-up or highlighting the main points
- a quiz programme
- a documentary format
- a short story, highlighting an incident which will create an awareness and carry educational messages
- a dramatized television play/serial/series with clearly defined educational and awareness points being brought into focus; a combination of an entertainment format weaved-in with the educational component
- animation or cartoon programmes
- scripts in teleplays or telefilm format can also be based on “literary classics”.

In fact the scope and potential for developing educational programmes is enormous, the only limitation is that of the scriptwriter’s imagination.

2.4 FORMATS FOR TV SCRIPTS

A TV script can be written in many different formats. One of the most commonly used formats is given below:

NARRATION	VISUALS (PIC)	SOUND (SFX)
PASWAN, LABOUR CONTRACTOR (In Sync for the beginning and then (Voice over): Why is it necessary for him to go to Punjab every year? How many years has he been going?	LOCATION: PATNA STATION, BIHAR Bihari labourers getting on the train in Patna, Bihar. In the crowd we focus on Paswan and his group We Track Paswan along the platform and ask him to tell us his story	Announcement about the train going from Patna to Punjab. Ambience of station.

NARRATION	VISUALS (PIC)	SOUND (SFX)
We will highlight through his answers that HYV package was never introduced in his area because of political considerations & underdevelopment Even if it were, labourers and small peasants could not have availed of the package because it requires initial investment in many inputs and developed infrastructure How trickle-down benefits of the GR in Punjab etc. have not reached them How despite surplus food, starvation continues for the poor How he has to go every year to Punjab in search of work and send money to his family back in Bihar so that they do not starve	Paswan tries to settle down in a packed compartment with his group Paswan in close-up profile Long shot of crowded train with labourers travelling even on top of the carriages Shots of Paswan and his group through the journey to Punjab; the landscape changes as the train moves through various regions. Camera pans on the rows of faces sitting in lines squeezed in the 3-tiered (train) bunks.	Fade-out train whistle

2.5 TV ADS

Advertising is an integral part of selling. Ever since man began to sell, he wanted another to buy. He exhorted the buyer through gestures, signs and words. He extolled the virtues of what he was selling and this in turn became the process of selling. The need to manufacture (or procure), sell and consume, became a condition of human existence. With industrial growth and organization of manufacturing process, we have now moved into the era of consumerism. The effort is on to find an audience in order to sell products to mass clientele. The content of our lives is to a large measure conditioned by media messages of what we ought to buy—from junk foods to everlasting peace! Advertising has come to stay.

With over two billion people watching it everyday, television is unquestionably the prime advertising vehicle of our times. It is the ultimate opinion maker, and

it holds captive an amazingly diverse and huge audience in previously unknown communion.

Suppose I want to sell a pair of shoes. How do I begin to sell it? A close scrutiny of its physical form would suggest the initial sales pitch. I have begun the process of writing pictures! An object can be seen from many angles, in different light, in many settings and with varied incidental details or positioning. When we structure these inputs to match our target market and highlight a particularly strong selling point—we have a pictorial representation of a sales promotion activity.

When we speak eloquently about the virtues of a particular object, its beauty and charm—we are arousing a basic human instinct—the instinct to own. It is not perchance that most of the advertising copies use adjectives. Free association of ideas, evocation of a mood, reflections of human impulses—these are all tools when one writes words for an advertisement. Using words in conjunction with pictures and other sounds provides an almost infinite possibility (theoretically) of creating an adroit or artistic mix. You can paint words using the whole palette of the lexicon, sometimes unconventionally and very often in an unorthodox manner.

2.5.1 Structuring a TV Ad

Let us structure a TV ad! M/s Pluto industries wants to launch an instant coffee. They tentatively call it ‘gold blend’. They have Nescafe as their competitor. Nescafe has a near monopoly in the market as an instant cent-per-cent coffee. Most other brands are coffee-chicory blends.

Product profile: What is the USP? It is a coffee with higher aroma. A cent per cent premium coffee.

What is the price? Slightly higher than Nescafe.

What are the distinctive features?

What is the wrapper colour scheme? Blue and white. Also white lid.

Let us structure a framework.

With the given inputs in the product profile, we have to structure a suitable campaign for the market segment identified.

It is reasonable to assume that literacy will be fairly high among the market segment in question— i.e. the Indian urban, upper middle and upper class. The choice of the medium of the ad is thus made automatically—English, which also reinforces the product identification with occidental cultural values that appeal to the target segment.

This literate group is able to respond better to incidental triggers than direct cues. If the film is slick and competent it should at the same time guard against being spectacular. Surfeit of special effects and gimmickry are usually relegated to the realm of science fiction by the target market. Our suggestion is a refined, aristocratic, slightly understated film.

The USP has been given as a “coffee with a higher aroma.” The word “aroma” is stronger in specific association of ideas, unlike the word “flavor”. Since the USP

is non-visual, associative ideas can be used as trigger cues. Again aroma is a word with typical masculine orientation. This gives us the referential aspects of the film.

Colour scheme of the wrapper and lid tend to suggest visual aristocracy. This is also in tune with the pricing.

A few observations:

- 1) Higher Aroma is strong USP in the case of any coffee. The reinforcement would be complete if the coffee is called **Aroma**
- 2) Incorporating certain incidental visual cues on the label would create positive synergy. Examples:
 - a) The acronym TM (Trademark) just after the brand name
 - b) Computer classification stripes
 - c) Prominent display of word **Instant**
 - d) An airtight lid (which requires pressing before unscrewing).

Let us now work on alternative storylines incorporating copy. Please note the way music is used. Atmospheric sound effects also play an important role. Also note the variation in copy. The following three storylines broadly represent different genres of TV ads. Note the use of closeups and attention to detail. Each storyline is of 30 secs. duration.

STORYLINE 1 – ONE shot only – 30 secs.

Exterior. Late afternoon. Portico of a very impressive house. The door is gleaming mahogany and brass. A liveried footman (face is not seen) is standing on the steps leading to the door. A luxury limousine glides into view. The sound of car doors opening and closing and firm authoritative footsteps going up. The persons are not seen. The door opens (opening sound). Camera glides past the car fender taking in, in incidental detail, the gleam and high polish of the car – preferably LIGHT BLUE – and ascends the steps in a fluid unbroken movement. Going into the house it encounters impeccable taste in flooring, walls, objects, fixtures etc. Also music. Each visual cue encountered by the camera signifies taste. The music builds up.

Camera lazily pans. A beautiful male hand is in the process of moving across the field of vision. Elegant shirt cuff and a cufflink are also seen. The hand moves towards the background revealing a jar of coffee from which he has just withdrawn coffee in a spoon and put into a cup. A liveried hand enters the top of the frame with a silver coffee pot. Pours steaming water. Music goes lower and on the sound of the pouring water, a voiceover:

THE AROMA OF GOOD LIVING
GOLD BLEND – THE PREMIUM COFFEE
(Freeze)

STORYLINE-2

Exterior. Late afternoon/early evening. The rolling lawns of a private estate. A horse with a rider— handsome, not so young, and macho looking —comes into

view. The horse is paced at an easy canter —NOT galloping. The rider comes towards the camera and dismounts. He hands the reins to a **syce** and joins a girl who –like him – is dressed for outdoors. They link hands and go towards a table set in the shade of a tree. Beautiful table linen, a food hamper, distinguished crockery etc. they settle down to a repast. Not a word has been spoken. NO MUSIC. Only natural sound and sound effects, occasional laughter.

The girl makes coffee for the man and for herself handling everything with loving care. Coffee jar is seen in closeup.

The horse neighs in the **far** distance, very low.

VOICEOVER- THE AROMA OF GOOD LIVING
GOLD BLEND
THE PREMIUM COFFEE

STORYLINE-3

Several coffee jars are lined up together. The labels do not show the trade name. we see drawings representing facial features. The bottle at the end has its label averted.

Each lid pops open in turn and the mouth on the label gets animated on voices (All female)

Bottle 1- I am filter coffee

Bottle 2- I am south Indian coffee

Bottle 3- I am smooth

Bottle 4- I am creamier coffee

Bottle 5- I am select.

The sixth bottle swivels around. We see the product with the label representing the tradename.

VOICEOVER – Base Male VOICE-
GOLD BLEND
THE AROMA COFFEE

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Write a 30 sec. TV ad for Cherry Blossom shoe polish, on the basis of what you've learnt so far.

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2.6 PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Let us suppose the theme of the ad film is on adult literacy. There has to be a story-line in the script preceding the screenplay which may be like this:

An illiterate village belle in her teens is working in the in-laws household in a village. It is a typical Indian village with ponds, trees, kutcha roads, cattle, lights and shades. The girl is without her husband who is working in the Army. She has her old in-laws who also do not know how to read and write. Her brother-in-law is too senior to her to have that kind of proximity as to help her in reading a letter from her husband. Now a letter from her husband arrives from the post office. The postman comes to deliver the letter. She requests him to read it for her, which the busy postman refuses. There could be three turns of events from this point.

- i) The postman might agree to read the letter in which some intimate lines written by the husband would not remain private since it would be read by the postman and she would have reason to blush.
- ii) Another turn of events could be that she remains ignorant of the letter containing the message that the husband would not be able to come back since his leave has been refused. This is because she is illiterate and is not able to either read or share it with anybody else. She runs around keeping the letter close to her chest.
- iii) The third possibility could be, instead of a letter she get a money order and she is cheated by the postman.

2.6.1 Scripting a PSA

Once the story-line is approved, a shooting script is written. When the theme and the treatment have been agreed upon and approved, more detailed research into the subject matter can proceed. Naturally, investigations will have been made already; but now, all the information that the film is to present must be systematically gathered together and checked for accuracy. Wherever possible, locations should be visited, contacts established with those persons whom the crew will have to work with, and camera angles planned.

The shooting script: Let us consider first, the case where a full and detailed shooting script can be produced. What information should it contain? The ideal script should describe the visuals, shot by shot.

First sequence: Exterior Pan Shot. A typical Indian village is shown where the village belle is washing clothes at the well within the courtyard of her house.

Second sequence: The postman comes on a cycle with a bunch of letters and money orders. He knocks at the door, the girl comes and opens the door. The village belle is extremely happy to see the money order and the letter written on it.

The postman wants to sit in the house. He is invited inside the house and given a stool to sit. In-laws who do not come out but enquire from behind about the stranger. She says that Money Order has come from her husband.

Third sequence: She is bringing water while the postman counts the money and gives her just half of the amount. Postman's vile postures reflect his misdeed.

She is not very happy to get only Rs. 300/- and she offers sweets along with water to the postman.

Fourth sequence: she counts the money and goes inside the house. Shows it to her mother-in-law who also expresses disappointment. She wakes up the father-in-law.

Fifth sequence: (Interior) Inside the house father-in-law asks the village belle to bring his pair of spectacles. Father-in-law, whose eyes have gone bad, wears the glasses and starts reading the letter on the money order with great difficulty. The letter is addressed to the father-in-law who could not be called at the time of the delivery of the Money Order since he was sleeping. Now that he has woken up, the village girl has given the Money Order and money to her father-in-law. The old man is shocked and abuses the daughter-in-law.

Sixth sequence: Mother-in-law tells her husband "Why don't you teach her alphabets?" Background narration carrying the message of literacy.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Frame a PSA for organ donation, to be shown over TV.

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2.7 TV WRITING FOR CHILDREN

A writer for children's programmes needs a much greater understanding of his/her target audience than a general scriptwriter. In India, producers who are asked to produce children's programmes are also involved in the production of a million other things. Small wonder that children's programming has got almost nowhere. Children constitute a special audience and a children's programmer needs special skills and knowledge. While writing skills for television remain much the same for all programmes, it is the support structure in children's programming that is of the greatest importance.

- i) Television programming for children needs first to answer the question: who is a child? It is not enough to say that a child is a young adult. Certain differences between the adult and the child need to be understood. A young child obviously lacks the years and experience that an adult has. Children know less about the physical and social world. Subsequently, the vocabulary with which they operate is also very limited. Words like "idealism", "liberty", "manipulation", etc may not be understood by the child. Therefore, the first

ground rule: **use words that are simple, commonly used and easy to understand.**

T.V.

- ii) A child does not understand complex relationships. The intricacies of human relationships and the compulsions of character and motivation would confuse a child. They see characters as “good” and “bad”. Avoid presenting complex characters and complex human relationships in children’s programmes.
- iii) Children of the age groups (3-6) and (7-9) have problems understanding experience over a long sequence of time. They see events and situations as unconnected and disparate. Television programming for children needs to take note of this. One needs to take into account the limited attention span of this age group. Short programmes, episodic in nature and covering a short time sequence make good viewing for children.
- iv) While children have relatively limited experience they compensate for this by their ability to take long imaginative leaps into fantasy. In his writings, Rabindranath Tagore has often mentioned the flexibility of a child’s imagination: one that easily crosses over from reality to fantasy and back. Therefore, it does not seem strange for a dog to speak or cats to wear clothes

A word of caution needs to be sounded here. Because children see illusion literally, the lines between reality and fantasy become blurred. In a world where nothing is impossible, many children feel, for example, that characters in a radio or TV programme actually live and sleep in the set behind the screen. (As a child I remember staring at the radio for hours waiting for little people to walk across). As far as older children are concerned, we need to debate whether we should not occasionally, demystify films and television for children and make them aware that what they are watching are indeed make-belief. In the USA once a child threw himself out of a high rise building in an attempt to fly like Superman. While introducing fantasy characters on TV, effort should be on to make children aware of reality as distinct from make-belief.

- iv) Lastly, small children love repetition. Most children of this age love to read the same story over and over, sing the same song over and over and recite the same rhyme over and over. The child’s love for repetition may drive members of the family mad but s/he enjoys every minute of it. However, repetition in television programming needs to be done innovatively without being boring or tendentious.

2.7.1 Preparing the Script

In writing scripts for children some generic guidelines that are common to all scriptwriting need to be followed. Most importantly, the precise function of the scriptwriter should be clarified. Very often, in India, scriptwriting is entrusted to people who write prose well. The assumption being that anyone who writes well should also be able to write scripts well. One must realize that the art of scriptwriting is entirely different. Scriptwriting is not writing the narration text or commentary. A scriptwriter is first a visualizer. S/he visualizes the script of which the verbal content is a part and in some cases may not be a part at all.

A good scriptwriter is able to:

- 1) **Visualize creatively.** S/he is able to think in pictures and not in words. S/he grapples with the challenge of expressing ideas by exploiting the visual potential of the medium. Imagining is an integral part of effective television scripting.
- 2) **Write for the ear.** In scripting the verbal portions, a good scriptwriter writes for the ear. A difficult sentence in a book can be read twice but words from a script cannot be repeated if the viewer has not understood. Therefore, the verbal content of a script needs to be expressed using simple colloquial words. Long, complicated sentences should be avoided unless they have a particular role to play. Similarly, dialogues should be informal and natural. They should sound conversational and not staged.
- 3) **Focus Attention.** A scriptwriter must be careful not to clutter the screen up with too many audio-visual messages. S/he should know when to highlight the audio and when to highlight the visual and how to effect both. Simultaneous projection of hectic visual activity and important dialogue will cause both to be lost.
- 4) **Counterpoint visuals.** A good script does not insult the viewer's intelligence by using visuals that directly show what the commentary talks about. The commentary or narration need not show the obvious. Both the audio and visual should enrich and enhance each other.

Scriptwriting for children needs a certain recentering on the part of the scriptwriter (recentering is the ability to see from many different points of view). It is important for the scriptwriter to have a very good idea of production attributes. This means that a scriptwriter should have a very good understanding of not just the content but how children would like to see it. The following specific points should be kept in mind.

- 1) **Never talk down to a child.** Not only does condescension annoy the child (who wants to be taken seriously) but it makes him/her feel disempowered. Programmes for children should make them feel empowered and confident not passive and powerless. The tone adopted should therefore be one not of 'sweet condescension' but one that is serious in intent and at the same time lively and conversational.
- 2) **Keep it simple.** Don't confuse a child with too much of information. This is specially relevant for programmes that fall under the category of 'knowledge and information'. Only a few important points should be made and all extraneous information kept out. If the programme is dramatic keep the storyline direct and uncomplicated. Develop a few scenes completely and coherently rather than write a succession of staccato scenes.
- 3) **Attention span.** The attention span of the child would depend on the specific age-group and this should be kept in mind while scripting. Make sure, the child does not switch off.
- 4) **Production elements** Research findings indicate that certain auditory features attract children more (like loud music, sound-effects, peculiar voice, nonspeech vocalizations, etc;) that moderate action better enhances plot

advancement than rapid action that is often used purely for sensory excitement. It was also found that while high levels of physical activity hold attention, **long zooms** consistently hold attention.

- 5) **Cultural specificity.** Communication works best when the message is tailored to suit specific local and cultural needs. Universalism is a noble concept but unfortunately it does not work for communication.
- 6) **Avoid Metaphors.** Do not expect children to “catch” metaphors or abstract symbolisms. “The Lord is our shepherd” will mean just that for the child and nothing more.
- 7) **Humour.** This is an essential ingredient for children’s programmes. Most children love to see and read “funnies”. Slapstick humour (falling, tumbling, turning) usually never fails to evoke laughs. Jokes and nonsense also appeal to them.

2.8 SUMMING UP

In this Unit we have spoken about the specific characteristics of the TV medium and given you an understanding of the kinds of scripts “which work” or “which do not work”. We’ve also spoken about TV ads and PSA and how they are to be scripted. Last, but not the least, we’ve spoken about TV writing for children which calls for a good understanding of the specific needs of children. We’ve provided basic rules for scripting programmes for children which include writing in simple language and in an entertaining style.

2.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Write out your TV ads and discuss your answers with your peers and your counsellor at the study centre.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Write out your TV ads and discuss your answers with your peers and your counsellor at the study centre.

UNIT 3 UNDERSTANDING NEW MEDIA

Structure

- 3.0 Aims and Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 What is New Media?
 - 3.2.1 Difference Between Old and New Media
 - 3.2.2 How Print Organizations are Learning to Adapt
 - 3.2.3 What is New Media Story-telling
 - 3.2.4 The Emergence of You Tube
- 3.3 How New Media has Opened Windows of Opportunity
 - 3.3.1 Emergence of Digital Journalism
 - 3.3.2 Difference from Print and Broadcast
- 3.4 Guidelines for Writing for Online Media
 - 3.4.1 Brevity and Research
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 - 3.4.3 Listicles
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 - 3.4.7 Visual Enhancement, Rewriting and Editing
- 3.5 Summing Up
- 3.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 3.7 Glossary

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we attempt to understand what the new media is all about. We also examine the differences between the old and new media. We see how we are now learning to adapt to the new forms of media that are emerging that are destined to change our lives in ways we cannot perceive and understand at the moment. Storytelling in the new media is different and this Unit details how it can be effectively executed.

At the end of this Unit you will be able to:

- grasp the characteristics of new media
- understand the rules of writing for online media
- begin writing online content

3.1 INTRODUCTION

We have discussed various aspects of creative writing and how to practice and master it. The creative writing field has now got more exciting as it has more

opportunities to offer with the emergence of the new media. It is commonly called digital media and it is important for all of us to understand it so that we can seamlessly become a part of the changing media landscape. As we are dealing with a new medium that is growing by the day, we need to constantly innovate and improvise. The medium is dynamic and it will keep changing and so we also need to rise to the challenge.

The new media as we refer to today is not all that new. It has been around in India since the late 1990's. As print and television struggle to stay alive and relevant, the new media is making strides and emerging as the medium of the future. It is so dynamic that changes punctuate its growth all the time. That is why it is necessary to stay connected, learn new technology and be comfortable with the medium.

The new media holds out a new promise for both young and old aspiring writers as it opens new windows of opportunity. One of them is YouTube that has helped many youngsters to showcase their talent, creativity and also make some money pedaling their content.

The new media offers opportunities to all kinds of writers. It could be fiction, poetry, drama, non-fiction, personal columns and blogs. The enormity of the web is overwhelming with millions of websites offering everything you would have ever wanted to know.

Writing for the new media is not rocket science. So, relax. It is quite simple. One just needs to understand the nuts and bolts of it and then practice it till it becomes something you can do with speed. Writing for the internet demands that you write with great speed as websites always want to be the first with the news. It also requires you to tell your story in the simplest way possible so that it is easily understood by everyone. Everything needs to be explained as readers can be from any part of the world. They may not be familiar with the background or with the terms you are using. You also have to learn how to write tight copy as usually internet readers want quick snappy information and do not usually want to wade through thousands of words to get what they want.

Writing for the new media has to be different from writing for print or television. It is a style that will keep changing. It will be more interactive and dynamic. It will incorporate words, visuals and sound into its stories. The storytelling will be different as the audience is also different. That brings us into the world of the multi-media journalist who wears different hats when working for the new media which has brought in an exciting convergence of different mediums. This was something we did not imagine a few decades ago when there was no internet.

How will you do the storytelling? This is as important as deciding the focus of your piece. Once you work on the structure of your feature article or story, give it a title that incorporates key words that can be detected by a search engine, write an interesting intro, give the piece sub-heads, use illustrations, graphics and videos, and you can be certain that you have a piece of writing that will grab eyeballs.

3.2 WHAT IS NEW MEDIA?

What jumps into your mind when the phrase “new media” is uttered? One thinks of the internet and everything that one can do using the online medium in passing

and processing information. While newspapers and magazines in the print form were static representations, the new media is dynamic, fast moving, highly informative, interactive and can use graphic pictures and moving images.

The new media comprises websites, electronic content, online news outlets, blogs, vlogs, streaming audio and video, online communities, social media and use of virtual reality. It is a scenario where change is the norm as technology improves and comes up with new options and gadgets.

To distribute and spread content, new media uses digital computer technology. As its reach is wide and immediate, new media has made our world into a global village. Using feedback, new media can tweak content to suit readers or sense which way the wind is blowing as far as ideas and issues are concerned. Changing technology will shape the future of new media, year after year.

This digital revolution signals the revolution of publishing because of its capacity and ability to store vast amounts of data, easy retrieval and distribution of content. The internet helped the consumer of information to double up as its producer and distributor. Earlier, only a few had the wherewithal to do it. Now, you can do it sitting in your home as you challenge the monopoly that earlier media houses had.

3.2.1 Difference Between Old and New Media

When we refer to old media, we are basically talking about mass media most of the time. We are thinking of print, television and radio. While the print media reigned, consumers were ready to wait for early morning to get the news and patiently read it. Now, the span of patience to wait has disappeared and consumers would rather have their menu of news, current affairs and entertainment immediately. They want it as it happens.

While mass media was not interactive, the new media is vigorously interactive. Mass media users were seen as mostly passive, but new media users are actively seen processing information as never before with speed and innovation. It is because of this that it is mopping up so much of traction as they see how creative producers of the new media are turning the world of information into one that does not cease to surprise. In terms of speed and amount of data churned out on a single issue, the new media attempts to beat print, television and radio all through the day.

Within seconds, the new media can throw up thousands of pages of information on a subject from different corners of the world. Large amounts of information can be stored and archived. It can even be hyperlinked so that it helps consumers understand more and see the larger picture in all its dimensions.

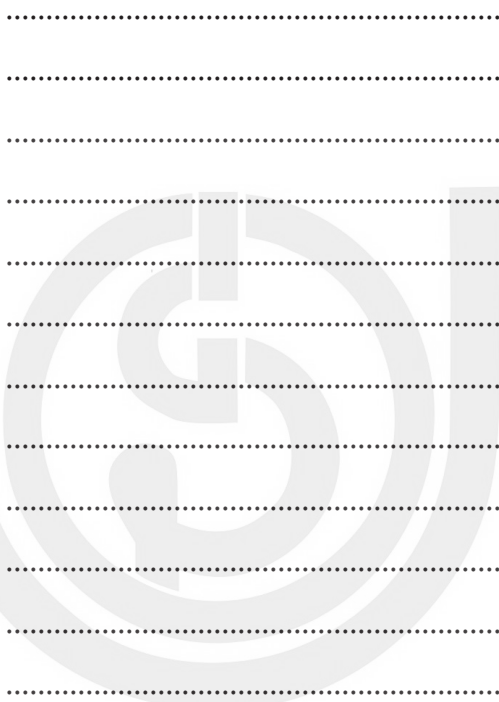
The old traditional media which is essentially print, television and radio are battling to stay alive and relevant. If print and television have to survive, both will have to provide superior content as ultimately the consumer is going to go where there is quality. New media on the other hand, is reaching out to millions of new consumers everyday, with content that keeps them glued, as internet penetration increases all over the world. News reporters or media organisations can crowdsource information today using the social media. It can get both information and videos from areas which are not easily accessible or where

reporters find it difficult to travel to. But crowdsourced information needs to be verified to ensure credibility.

Using the online media, journalists and communicators can now engage with their audiences through Chats, Facebook posts, Twitter, Instagram, Google Hangout and so on. It is imperative for the digital journalist to understand what the medium is capable of, its challenges and how best it can be utilised to spread information. They also have to understand the economics of running an online venture, how to attract visitors, keep them engaged and get them coming back for more content and interaction. They have to understand the metrics to measure visitor engagement and then ply it to advertisers to build revenue.

Check Your Progress 1

- (i) Compare a major news story that has been covered in a newspaper with the same news story covered by an online media website. List the differences.



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(Check your answer with that given at the end of the Unit.)

3.2.2 How Print Organisations Are Learning To Adapt

Initially, print organisations did not know how to react to the onslaught of new media. They also started their websites and put their entire newspaper on the web. It did not work as readers were not ready to read it. It also did not get advertisers. It then struck print organisations that the management of news for the web has to be done differently. They started writing stories differently for the web. Many of them hired special web teams as the treatment was different. The stories were shorter and tighter. There were also options for readers to interact with the author, and share their views.

Print outfits also understood that the economics of digital journalism worked differently. They started taking an interest in those who visited their sites, how

much time they spent on stories, what they liked to read and not read. This data was used to market the website to advertisers who wanted to know how many eyeballs the site attracted.

Print organisations started investing in research to shape these metrics so that they could carve a better and sustainable revenue model. They had no choice but to do this as print revenues were falling and online revenues were rising though the advertising pie remained more or less the same.

Print is increasingly moving to do shorter stories just like the new media. It is also giving longer versions of a news story to read on its web portal while the shorter one is in the newspaper. This ploy also helps increase traffic on its website. The stories on its website would often have stories that are not in the newspaper acknowledging that both are different mediums and have to be handled differently.

Print organisations have seen the value of adding multimedia content to their web portals. So, it is not strange to see news portals which are being run by newspapers and magazines uploading videos to tell the story. By adapting to television and to the internet, print media outlets are fighting to stay relevant and hold on to the reader who is spoilt for choice. As media convergence is the new reality, it all depends on what print organisations do, to satiate the news hunger of consumers who want both credibility and quality in this new information technology age.

3.2.3 What Is New Media Storytelling?

Just a few decades ago, grandparents used to adopt oral storytelling to narrate experiences, incidents and events. The print media told them in words. Television narrated it with visuals. Storytelling became even more interesting with the coming of the internet. The new media moghuls realised that they were gifted with large audiences spread all over the world who could access its material whenever they wanted. It was not just the increase in the size of the audiences that changed but the way stories were now told with just a click on the computer was also new. You had pictures, the magic of video and the accompanying sound introduced you to a new experience of how stories were told. Conversational styles, narratives and chatty language were found to work particularly well on the web.

If we liked them we could share it with our friends or with those who needed to see them. New media storytelling helped us to tell stories in such an engaging and interactive way that had been hitherto impossible with the printed word.

3.2.4 The Emergence of You Tube

Before YouTube was created in 2005, those who wanted to communicate with broad audiences through multimedia had to go through the old media gatekeepers like publishers and television stations or the film industry. Suddenly, YouTube made it possible for anyone to reach a global audience inspiring talent to use a variety of new multimedia composing tools. Now, just about anyone with web access on a computer or mobile device can compose multimedia messages, ranging from videos that resemble film and television, to completely new forms of communication.

Grandparents too are now using new media to communicate via the social web. If they can do it, anyone can. What it essentially means is that we all have the potential to become new media storytellers.

Until the rise of new media, our choices for sharing our personal stories were limited to oral delivery or writing. Actually, it worked well for stories that were till then primarily delivered through words. Both methods invited the audience to employ their imaginations to visualize scenes. Both provided storytellers the opportunity to reveal the inner workings of their characters' minds in ways that could not be easily visualised. But oral delivery allowed storytellers to enhance their words with body language and their vocal styles that would be difficult to replicate in writing. On the other hand, writing gave storytellers the freedom to use literary techniques that oral delivery would have found difficult to use.

With new media coming on the scene, storytellers can now use the technique of cinematic storytelling as they have access to video and sound. They can, therefore, create a unique sensory experience that gives a different emotional experience that mere words cannot. This opportunity is pregnant with creative possibilities that were not even imagined a few decades ago.

3.3 HOW NEW MEDIA HAS OPENED WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

Earlier, editors were the gatekeepers you needed to approach to get anything published in a newspaper or magazine. Many tried and repeatedly failed as there was limited space and lots of competition even among professionals. However, when the online media came along, anyone could write whatever they wanted and could publish it on social media or on their blogs or websites. Every writer could now be a publisher.

A lot of good sensitive content that the mainline media was ignoring, or did not want to touch was now making a splash on the online media. It opened a large window of opportunity to those who wanted to communicate or say something. It could be a piece of writing, an audio clip or even a short film or documentary. All of it could easily be uploaded on the online media. Again, this was unimaginable just a few decades ago.

3.3.1 Emergence of Digital Journalism

With the genesis of online media, one of the first surprises was the emergence of digital journalism and the web journalist. Websites started toying around with news and features and started competing with the traditional media. They were crisper and faster. Over a period of time, the web journalists matured with their writing and the presentation of content. They worked hard on their stories so as to compete with print. They also created videos of the same to compete with the visual media. In a way, it had the best of both the worlds.

Numerous news websites cropped up seeing a great opportunity to leap into the future. Over the years, it has captured a large readership of youngsters who are glued to the net for any information they want. While it catered to an audience that wanted quick and well written stories in its shortest form, it also catered to long "form journalism with news and feature websites running long in-depth

articles that were well researched and could not be found in the traditional media.

3.3.2 Difference from Print and Broadcast

Writing for the web has to be different from the way we write for print or television. It must be tightly written, as short sentences and short paragraphs is what web readers like. Web readers are impatient so getting straight to the point is important and ensuring that your content is saying something new is imperative.

Your first sentence must be such that they are forced to read further. For example, look at this one: “A lot of coastal areas in India would be seriously affected and may be under water due to climate change in the next ten years.” Readers would want to read it to figure out what made you say that. Putting the most important information in the first paragraph is a good technique and it is good to use bullets as they quickly summarise the points.

Pull quotes should be highlighted and placed between the texts to continue keeping the reader interested. If they read just the quote, they will be tempted to read the story. Active sentences rather than passive ones, should be used and in order to write tightly, things should not be repeated. Audios and videos can be used to buttress what you are trying to say.

3.4 GUIDELINES FOR WRITING FOR ONLINE MEDIA

Writing for the digital media also follows basic journalistic principles. You have to write in a simple, easy to understand style so that a larger audience can benefit from it. Simplicity on the net can help you achieve magical results in terms of attracting eyeballs.

3.4.1 Brevity and Research

Keep your writing brief and to the point. Short pieces work well on the web. Pieces should ideally be between 400 and 800 words. Web readers do not have the patience to read very long pieces unless it is exceptional in terms of reporting or analysis. Most web readers skim or scan content. Web readers also have a very short span of attention. If things slow down, they grab the mouse to keep moving on. Web users want information in the fastest way possible. That is why tight and concise writing is important in online writing. This is crucial as readers on the web are always in a hurry. There is so much for them to check out on the internet. That is why simplicity works so well rather than clever phrasing or a punchy headline which makes readers think. They have no time to do that. Keep your writing simple. Look at the best websites and see how sometimes just one sentence becomes a paragraph. It makes a sharp point and then moves to the next paragraph. It is a good strategy to use active verbs. Writing in the present tense not only reads well on the web, it also gives your piece a sense of immediacy.

It is always good research that helps you write well. After you have done your research, you have a broader perspective. You feel more confident about writing. Ensure that you get to the best sources on the subject. Quote them. Also credit the information you have picked up. Having a good understanding of the subject

helps you write faster and with a sense of authority. Research also helps you understand the audience you are writing for. It helps you write more purposefully for a target audience. You can then determine the tone of your piece; should it be chatty and conversational or academic? It all depends on the character of the audience; their gender, their socio-economic background, race etc. Stick to facts and ensure that you have crosschecked them. Accuracy is a must. Credit your sources so that there is credibility. Be objective and remember that is one of the hallmarks of good journalism. A lot of careless content is floating around. Do not become a part of that. Check your writing again and again for grammatical or punctuation errors.

3.4.2 Focus and Structure

It is important that the piece you are writing has a focus and does not run all over the place. Before you start writing, ask yourself what the focus of the piece is. Why are you writing it? What do you want readers to know? What is it that they already know so that you do not have to dwell on it too much? Sometimes, it helps to narrate your story to someone and while you are narrating it, you discover what the best focus of the piece is going to be.

Once you have collected a lot of information, chances are that you might get confused on how to write it out. So, make out a plan. Jot down the points you want to make, on a sheet of paper. Then, on another paper, jot down the same points but in a logical order. Think of logical progression of thought when you do that. What you are essentially doing is making a structure. You now know what is the best way to start your story. You see what the weak areas are and then start to work on reinforcing it with more content. You know where the quotes will fit. Basically, you have worked out the beginning, the middle and the end.

After a few paragraphs, it is a good idea to have subheads to break the text. This guides readers about what the following paragraphs will deal with. Subheads have to be concise and direct. Just two or three words should convey the gist to the reader. It also helps break up long text and give a sense of relief in both layout and reading. Subheads help readers to figure out if they want to continue reading the whole section or skip it for another. It also helps attract the reader's attention.

3.4.3 Listicles

A Listicle is basically a short-form of writing that uses a list as its thematic structure. However, it is padded with short copy to supplement the bullets.

Listicles are generally lists about a topic, put out as sharp bullet points. It can help a reader to quickly grasp the main points. It can simplify complicated subjects. For example: *Why will nanotechnology be important in the future?* Just reading the title tells you what to expect or learn. Then, you explain using bullet points why and how nanotechnology will play a major role.

You can create a Listicle out of any topic. For example, you can easily make a list of ten points on how to beat stress at the workplace. All you need to do is some research and talking to stress experts, doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists.

Sometimes, it is good to put the information in bullet points. Web readers love it as they do not have to wade through hundreds of words to figure out the subject. It is also easy to read and understand Listsicles.

3.4.4 Links and Interactive Options

Link your story to other similar stories. Readers may want to go back and forth. If you have given links to similar stories, it helps them get a wider perspective. It can be of enormous help to journalists and researchers as they can look at the angles of different articles on the same subject. Some links would take the reader to the background of the story or a particular important event. Your piece can have both internal and external links to help the reader to explore. The internal links take the reader to other sections of the same story or other similar stories on the website. It could also be audio or video links. The external links take the reader to other websites that have similar or related material.

One of the greatest advantages in an online story is that the reader can comment on the story or directly get in touch with the writer. The facility of using a click to see, hear and read more, or to send a message to someone in the story makes the reader feel empowered.

3.4.5 Headlines and Keywords

Headlines for online pieces have to be written differently. We have to craft headlines that are more direct with the message. It has to immediately convey to the reader what the piece is all about. Internet surfers want information within seconds. So, we cannot have a headline that plays on words or uses a euphemism. Neither can it keep you guessing. It is normally longer and ensures that it has some key words so that search engines can pick up your piece when someone is looking for information. Internet users want to get information fast.

One way of dramatically increasing your readership is to adroitly use relevant, researched keywords throughout your article. As eager information hunters on the net search for the keywords, your piece will spring up.

It will be good to dig up some research on the keywords that operate in the domain that you are working on so that you can exploit it in your writing. Do not introduce keywords superficially as it will show. Let it happen organically and seamlessly when you write.

3.4.6 Punctuation and Spell Check

Many bloggers feel that spellings and grammar do not really matter on the internet. How wrong they are! Readers will not respect or take pieces seriously that have careless spellings or grammatical errors. Always do a check on spellings and grammar. Computers have programmes that do it. However, it may not be the best option as sometimes a fragment that you have deliberately written as a part of your style, can show up as a mistake as the computer will sense it as a fragment and say that it is grammatically wrong. Spellings also differ from country to country and it depends whether you opt for British or American spellings. Do not ever use short forms that you normally use while chatting on the net or sending messages on your cell phone.

3.4.7 Visual Enhancement, Rewriting and Editing

A visual will always add to the magic of your writing. It will enhance the piece by telling its story visually. It will attract readers to it. The supporting visuals will add credibility to what you are trying to say. If you are using photographs of the people you have quoted, readers relate better to what you are trying to say. Research has indicated that content with images attract more than 90 percent more views than those without visuals. Visuals also help to accentuate the points you are making. Imagine reading a story about an earthquake without visuals. Or about a game of cricket without photographs of iconic moments.

Once your piece is done, take a short break and read it again. Read it unemotionally. Pretend that someone else has written this piece. You will see that it needs to be written tighter, some things need to be rewritten to make it easily understandable, some areas need better style of writing and in some cases there needs to be more information.

Instead of feeling bad about a sloppy piece of writing, get down to rewriting. Your first draft is not always the best. The more you rewrite, the more polished the piece becomes.

Work on every sentence and see how it can be better written. Cut out the redundant words or paragraphs. Cut out repetition. Often, we say the same thing again and again using different expressions.

Check for grammar and punctuation errors. Examine if the structure works. Is there a logical progression of ideas? Have the concepts been adequately explained? Crosscheck your facts and figures. Have you got all of them right? You could break up the story into chunks so that it can be easily read. It also gives a choice to the reader on what to read and what could be skipped.

It is not easy to edit your work as you get emotionally attached to it. You can also get someone else to do it. Do not rush through your editing. Spending time on giving finishing touches to your writing is worth it. You will see how it sparkles in the end.

Check Your Progress 2

Write a piece of around 300 words for an online publication.

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(Check your answer with that given at the end of the Unit.)

3.5 SUMMING UP

In this Unit we've spoken about the following issues:

- New media has made inroads affecting traditional media.

- Print media is learning to adapt and change in the new scenario.
- The new media is making an impact with its dynamic content, blogs, vlogs, streaming audio and video and social media.
- There are stark differences between old and new media.
- New media storytelling is conversational. Using moving pictures and sound, it is dynamic.
- It reflects relevant and contemporary issues.
- YouTube has changed the way we consume online content.
- New windows of opportunity have opened out with new media flourishing.
- Writing for online is not the same as writing for print and broadcast.
- Techniques to write for the online media.

3.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- (i) The story in the newspaper will have all the facts written out like a typical news story. It might have a photograph along with it. The online story on the other hand, would have a longer headline that will factor in key words so that it gets picked by search engines, it will have short sentences, short paragraphs, boxes with parts of the story highlighted with pull quotes or important facts. It may have a video on the subject, a blog, links to other similar stories and also options for readers to make their comments.

Check Your Progress 2

- (i) The piece for the online publication will be a multimedia one. When you write, you will be thinking of SEO, giving it subheads, a smart headline that will invite readers to explore the story, putting the important points in the first few paragraphs, conducting interviews with the principal actors, creating graphics and showcasing statistics with illustrations. It will have lots of photographs, videos that would be related to the piece, an accompanying blog, and a comments section and so on.

3.7 GLOSSARY

You will find in the glossary a short list of the terms used in this Unit.

Blog: It is a regular record of your thoughts, opinions or experiences that you put on the internet for other people to read. It could also deal with a particular theme like food or fashion.

Vlog: It is a video blog where you record your thoughts, opinions, or experiences.

Crowdsourcing: It is when you ask a large group of people or the general public through the internet for help to execute a project or some task.

Eyeballs: It refers to the number of people who watch a particular website.

Listicles: It is a piece of writing presented wholly or partly in the form of a list. It can also have copy to supplement the points in the list.

Hyperlink: an icon, graphic or text in a document that links to another file or document. It is activated by clicking on a highlighted word or image.

Hypertext: a text with hyperlinks.

SEO: Search engine optimization



UNIT 4 WRITING FOR NEW MEDIA

Structure

- 4.0 Aims and Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Writing Blogs
- 4.3 Managing Facebook Content
- 4.4 Content Writing for New Media
 - 4.4.1 Stories with Bullet Points
 - 4.4.2 Digital Content Writing Requires Diverse Skills
 - 4.4.3 Characteristics of a Good Web Portal
- 4.5 What is a Multimedia Story?
- 4.6 Digital Ethics
- 4.7 How New Media is the Future
 - 4.7.1 Online Challenges
 - 4.7.2 Long Form Narratives
- 4.8 Twitter, E books, Podcasts
- 4.9 Summing up
- 4.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we explore how Blogging, Facebook, Twitter and Content Writing can be used effectively by writers. It tells you how you have to arm yourself as a multi-media journalist as you will have to multitask with writing, shooting a video, editing it and broadcasting it.

By the end of this Unit you will know how:

- to manage Facebook smartly and not dismiss it as just another social media vehicle
- to write Content for media which is not difficult if norms are followed to make it interesting
- search engine optimization (SEO) works and what a good web portal is all about, and
- digital ethics need to be followed.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Life without new media cannot be imagined today. New media is an umbrella term for all forms of electronic communication. Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Podcast, Instagram are all platforms which offer opportunities for content writing. People who want to write for the new media have to multitask today. They have to research, write, shoot, edit and deliver the final product which will be carried by

the internet. Many will be saying the same thing, but the story will be told differently over the net.

Content writing is becoming a big industry by itself as scores of institutions and companies want someone to write their content for their websites. It is not just writing that one needs to master as one needs to understand search engine optimization to ensure that searches pick up the content you write. We will take you through the characteristics of a good web portal and teach you how to write a good multimedia story.

Mobile phone connectivity is improving every day with more users signing for it. Smartphones and data packs are easily affordable thereby increasing its reach and use. Many will use their Smartphones like computers, as technology is constantly improving its features. Smartphones are now being used to shoot content even for television channels, while others are even using it to make documentaries and videos for YouTube.

Platforms like Blogging, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram help news producers who use the content on them and make programmes interactive. Audiences can today become producers of content by recording audio-visual content.

4.2 WRITING BLOGS

A blog is a web page typically run by an individual or small group where they post written content that is usually in an informal or conversational style. It could read like an opinion, a passing thought or just a simple diary-style entry. The post that has been the latest one appears on the page with other entries coming after it. The first blog appears last. A blog can have text, digital images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. So, a reader can have a great choice on what all to read on the subject.

The world of blogs exploded with growth in the late 1990's as easy-to-use web publishing tools came on the scene where users could publish content without knowing complicated technical methods of computer programming that were earlier required.

Over a period of time, bloggers went beyond just posting content. They started to interact with other bloggers building a huge network, where ideas and knowledge were exchanged and produced. Some bloggers wrote commentaries on subjects they were good at, ranging from cooking, adventure sports, politics or fashion. Blogs continue to be a source of information, discussion and entertainment as the number of bloggers increases every day.

Many blogs are run by a single author while many others have many writers. For example, a media outlet or a think tank would have a blog with many authors. These blogs run by institutions are widely read. Companies use blogs to push their brands. One Indian company that deals with automobiles has a blog which does not talk of its vehicles but talks of issues like education, rural empowerment and poverty.

The idea is to engage readers with these alluring subjects which ultimately change the image of the company at a subliminal level as they look at it with more respect than was there earlier. The fact that readers can leave comments on the

blog has also made it very popular. Writers get immediate feedback from readers whom they have never met. Many blogs allow free flow of comments, but many choose to moderate or filter comments to ensure that there is no offensive or hate speech creeping into it.

When writing a Blog think of the classic guidelines you need to follow. Like writing a headline that will be captured by a search engine, short sentences, short paragraphs with one thought in each, a logical structure so that it flows, proper transitions between paragraphs and a good concluding paragraph or line. Blogs that are rambling are hardly read. Keep to your focus. Keep your layouts simple and neat and avoid untidy, garish blog styles and colours.

Write good copy, catchy headlines and ensure there are absolutely no factual or grammatical errors. Provide links to relevant and useful information. It is a good idea to encourage readers to also look at similar blogs by providing links. All this will naturally lead to readers sharing your blog. Write with passion and delve only into topics you are familiar with. Do rewrite your blog as editing always helps sharpen your writing. Do respond to all those who leave comments on your blog or ask for some additional information. It builds a bridge between you and the reader. When you respond, they feel they are an important part of your blog community. They will tell others about you and your blog if they like your content.

Check Your Progress 1

- (i) Write a Blog of around 300 words.

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(Check your answer with that given at the end of the Unit)

4.3 MANAGING FACEBOOK CONTENT

Many Facebook users are careless about writing their posts, dismissing it as an informal platform. Many post senseless stuff like how they just shopped for a new pair of sunglasses or how awesome the pasta tastes at a local restaurant. Use your Facebook wall instead, to post sensible stuff, opinions or observations. Even if you are writing on your informal Facebook wall, it must be good stuff. After all, is not your writing a reflection of your personality?

Remember to give your writing all the attention it deserves. How have you crafted your opening paragraphs? Have you constructed your sentences the way they should? Check your grammar and punctuation.

The danger is that if you post rubbish, readers will judge you on that. Actually, you are telling the world about yourself, your ideas and your attitudes. Many pretend going through an emotion like happiness when they are actually feeling lonely, angry or frustrated. It is an unreal world. Be careful of what you post on

the social media as you are leaving your footprint on the internet. Your post reflects your credibility, honesty and reputation as a writer. Read your post actually before you hit the share button even if it causes some delay. On second reading, you may want to edit, rewrite or even consider junking it. Facebook also can be a source of stories as it has numerous interesting posts and an alert journalist with a nose for news can easily sniff and spot it. But, one needs to be careful while picking up ideas or information from Facebook as it needs to be authenticated.

At another level, Facebook is a powerful marketing tool used by marketers to push their products or ideas. The social media site is often used by businesses to market their goods, develop their brand identity and reach out to millions of Facebook users.

There is also paid content that can be uploaded. A business entity can build a page to showcase itself, its products and services. Businesses interact with users to form relationships hoping that ultimately their goods will be bought by them. Facebook contests, sweepstakes and promotions can also be used to boost sales and brand awareness.

4.4 CONTENT WRITING FOR NEW MEDIA

Digital content writing is the process of planning, writing and publishing on the internet. If you write well, you will be offered a lot of content writing assignments. It could be working on an article on depression or a review of a swanky car that has hit the market. It could be a brochure, a leaflet or a television shot for a short video. It could be a speech for your company's CEO. Content writers for the new media work according to the brief provided by a client. Develop your style of writing as it is the most prized possession. It will attract companies to offer you work as good writers are rare.

A good content writer will first research the profile of the audience being catered to. Once that is done, there is a clear perspective on the style and tone of writing that can be adopted. Then, you will be writing for the reader and not shooting in the dark. As you now know the reader, you will empathise better and it will show in your writing as you seem to understand them so well. Research on the subject thoroughly as it is the key for good content that will follow.

Interview experts to get a broader and richer perspective. Start writing only when you feel comfortable with the subject. Imagine the questions the reader would want to ask. Answer them without using jargon or technical terms. An easy to read writing style will only help you to get more readers. Apart from research, develop skills to understand how search engine optimization (SEO) works as you will need to weave it into your content in the form of key words so that search engines sniff it during a search.

Good content writers ensure that they turn in original content. Today, SEO can easily detect plagiarised content so protect your reputation. As you are reading a lot of material on the subject, sometimes you may not realize that you are saying the same thing or using similar sentences and words. So, use an online programme to check plagiarism. Remember that high quality content is always in demand and if you can do this, you will have content developers chasing you all the time.

4.4.1 Stories With Bullet Points

Bullet points have one great advantage: Everybody reads them because they are short and specific and persuasive. They stay in your mind as they are easy to remember. A lot of young readers prefer bullet points in online content as they do not have to wade through pages of copy to figure out the issue or subject. Research has indicated that readers look at content with bullets more than ones without it. But bullets have to be written well. It takes a bit of rewriting to get it right as it should be short and sharp.

For example, how can we use bullet points in an article we are writing on how we can reduce our carbon footprint? If you can have bullets like these, see how effective it would be instead of writing loads of copy:

- Switch off lights, fans television sets, air-conditioners and computers when not in use.
- During summers, draw curtains, pull blinds, and close windows during the day to cut out the heat. Get your colony to start rainwater harvesting. This could be used in the summer months when water is scarce for gardening and washing cars instead of using treated water.
- Buy vegetables and fruits that are in season. If you buy peas when they are out of season, frozen ones will be shipped from areas where they are in season, burning a lot of fuel in the process.

4.4.2 Digital Content Requires Diverse Skills

When you write for the web, you are not writing for yourself. You are writing for the world. You are blogging because you want to say something to a global audience. Or you are blogging or getting bloggers to write for you so that your business grows. You want Google to show you up on searches so that web traffic can seamlessly flow. So, fashion your writing to ensure that the Google algorithm will help you attract traffic. Initially, you may feel that you do not want to be bothered by search engine optimization (SEO) but there is no way you can ignore it if you want a reach.

It is important to be updated on SEO knowledge as search engine algorithms constantly change. One way of pandering to SEO is to start a blog. The keywords in blogs can help pull in more visitors to your website and once they are hooked, they will come back for more if they find the content interesting. The more keywords you craft, the more visitors you get. As your blog posts get shared, your website will grow.

4.4.3 Characteristics of A Good Web Portal

A good website would pay attention to its overall look and will not be carelessly designed.

The website should pay attention to the way the content is spread out with plenty of white space to give relief to the reader. The content generation and the intent of the website should be clearly spelt out and content should be punctuated with still or moving visuals, graphics and blurbs that highlight important quotes or information. One should take care to use fonts that do not strain the eye and it

should be able to support mobile readability. As speed is of vital importance, the setup should ensure that it is friendly to navigate. Visitors to the site must be able to easily find what they are looking for. It must be a secure site. Web visitors are rightly worried about security today and a good website should follow industry standards and guidelines. As it cares for the reader, it should carry a privacy statement.

4.5 WHAT IS A MULTIMEDIA STORY?

While executing a traditional news story, you would go to the spot, interview principal characters of the story, dig out facts and figures, meet the officials responsible, and click some pictures before rushing back to write the story. The reporter while writing would fix the focus of the story, embellish it with a good introduction, throw in some descriptions, figures, statistics, quotes and round it off with a good conclusion. Needless to say, analysis and perspective would be weaved in.

So, what is different when you do a multimedia story? A multimedia story will incorporate both the elements of print and television. It will be visual as it will dovetail video, sound and the written word. Sometimes, it will be live video streaming on the site of an event or happening. The multimedia journalist caters to the reader, viewer and listener. That is also why you must capture ambient sounds.

As storytellers, the online multimedia journalist must use all the techniques available to tell the story. Nothing is as good as listening to a real voice. It sounds more credible. You can use graphics with great effect. For example, build in a map to indicate where the place that you are talking about, is situated. Use a pie chart or bar chart to show different indicators. Readers love it as it helps them to understand complex ideas faster. For example, nothing works better than a chart that shows the rise and fall of the sensx on a particular day

The multi-media journalists are the winners today as they are in great demand in newspapers, radio or television stations. They are also wanted by organisations who want to use social media to push their messages. Clearly, journalism on the web is the future and will play out in ways we cannot even imagine as technology changes rapidly. It will help disseminate news to wider audiences in interesting ways as it will constantly innovate with changing tastes and audiences.

Today, technology is user friendly and uncomplicated and that is why even children are comfortable with it as they master it with a speed that makes adults envious. The elders take time as they are fearful of it and build a mindset against it. Writers and journalists would do well to embrace technology and keep themselves updated with all the changes and innovations to make sure their work travels all over the world.

Check Your Progress 2

- (i) If you have to do a multimedia story on how the price of tomatoes has gone up, how will you do it?

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.....
.....
(Check your answer with that given at the end of the Unit.)

4.6 DIGITAL ETHICS

While writing content for the media there is always the temptation to cut and paste somebody's work into your own and then label it as your own work. This is absolutely unethical and unacceptable. With the proliferation of the new media, this has become a sticky issue as a lot of plagiarism flourishes on the internet. With new technological tools that detect even the slightest attempt at plagiarism, it can cost you your job, or worse still, your reputation. The media has enough examples of some top journalists who have lost their jobs as they were party to pushing plagiarised content. Journalists must not misrepresent themselves in chat rooms and other online discussion forums unless they are going undercover in an investigation. But, it must be done with the full knowledge of their editors or seniors.

Whatever appears on the internet cannot be taken for granted. It may not be the truth. So, do not pick up stuff and then peddle it as news, unless you have cross checked and confirmed the facts and sources of that information. Remember, copyright and libel laws also apply to the internet. Social networks lure you to be fast and brief in your communications. Journalism is all about reporting facts. What we say online can drag us into a court case and being careful is after all, the best policy. Do not ever pick up information from a site you do not trust. If you are picking up information from a website, please credit it to that source. Attribution is a must. It gives you credibility and also tells the reader where the information came from. There are a lot of hoaxes on the net. A lot of propaganda is packaged as information. Fake news is all over the place. Whatever you put out in terms of news or opinions, must go through a thorough reality check. If in doubt, cut it out. The social media may be tempting, but one needs to be careful.

4.7 HOW NEW MEDIA IS THE FUTURE

There are no two opinions about the fact that the new media is the future. One can hardly visualize what shape it will take in the days to come as there are so many innovations that we see on a day to day basis. However, one thing is certain: It will further change our lives in ways we cannot even imagine yet.

Certainly, there is going to be a greater glut of information. In a second, you will get thousands of links to examine, for one piece of information. There will be tips, answers to questions, to-do lists, ideas on how to do the most difficult things and so on. Only those who were born before the internet can appreciate what a boon it is. Culling information was so difficult before. Not anymore—information is freely available today.

However, some sites have started charging money for their information but that is because they need a revenue model to survive. But there are many who provide it free all the time as they have worked out ways to use advertising revenue to compensate. We will also see how revenue models will change with time.

While packaging information, there will be an increased stress on having video dovetailed into the content just to cut through the clutter. Today, ads can be intrusive, but over time, companies will find ways to subtly get to you without irritating you. The net will get more advertising as time rolls by, as it is more affordable and is getting more surfers everyday all over the world.

4.7.1 Online Challenges?

Today anyone with a net connection can write anything online. Many websites allow for free comment on their sites without any editorial control. So, in the guise of opinion, there are defamatory statements, fake news, hate speeches and propaganda disguised as opinion or news. Most websites do not take responsibility for content on their sites as it is often copied from other sites or has comments by readers. It often leads to trouble triggered off by irresponsible mobs that can get provoked by a social media message or an online article.

Journalists today can be subjected to not only political oppression, but also to a form of censorship that comes from communities they are trying to address. In the 'old media', where communication was mainly one-way, public opinion was filtered through many channels before it would affect the work of a journalist. Today, the two-way communication of the internet and the direct exposure of journalists to public opinion can have a direct and immediate impact on their careers. In situations where public opinion becomes 'mob opinion', the very lives of journalists can be at stake.

Hate speech is all over the internet. Ljiljana Zurovac, Executive Director, Press Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina says that hate speech is often a mirror of societies' own lack of literacy and inability, due to lack of know-how, to phrase thoughts or frustrations in a coherent and decent manner. "Those who are the least educated and the most economically disadvantaged are the ones most prone to use hate speech, often to defend the very establishment that had put them in such a frustrating position. They tend to direct this frustration on whoever is portrayed as the enemy, be it individuals of other religions, nations or gender. But hate speech is not endemic to social classes of lower education or socio-economic status. Members of the middle and upper social class are prone to it as well, although as the educational level rises, hate speech becomes manipulative speech. This opens the possibility for misinformation, false interpretations and the twisting of facts that can entice the already frustrated and uneducated 'mob' to take certain false information to heart, and to act upon it – often in a violent manner," she said.

The biggest challenge is to ensure quality. A lot of content on the internet is mediocre in terms of writing, information and style of presentation. In the race to stuff content and show that it has a lot of it on the website, many of the sites have plummeted to pathetic depths. The challenge is to raise standards and only post stuff that will stand the test of time and will be respected for its content.

4.7.2 Long Form Narratives

As the online medium has no space restrictions like a newspaper or magazine, it can run long form narratives that can come from in-depth reporting, interpretation and analysis. Apart from the written word, the online medium can also carry

long videos that dive deep into the issue, something that television rarely does. Many websites are popular for their long-form narratives as it gives a deep insight no other popular form of reading does.

As long form journalism exits from traditional newspapers and magazines, it is making an entry into the digital media. It has a future as serious readers will always go there.

4.8 TWITTER, E BOOKS AND PODCASTS

Michael Geheren, an award-winning producer at South Dakota's CBS affiliate, calls Twitter one of the most valuable tools on the Internet. As a journalist, he says he met more powerful people over Twitter than he would ever have met otherwise. The key to networking is using resources around you, and Twitter is one of them.

You will do well to have a Twitter account if you are a creative writer or are into any form of communication as it helps you reach out to a very large audience that is growing every day. It is a great platform to share ideas, collaborate, aggregate and explore new things. You can also tell users what you are working on and if you need some help in terms of information.

Twitter is today used by governments, institutions, politicians, celebrities and journalists to put forward a point of view or share information. Although it is a debatable issue, one cannot entirely disregard how the Arab Spring used Twitter to mobilize support. In numerous countries, tweets are used to influence voters and sway public opinion. Leaders are using it to reach out to younger voters. Newspapers, magazines and news channels today carry or mention tweets from well-known personalities and turn it into a story. Hashtags have often become discussion points in television debates.

Ideally, Twitter is a great platform and an amazing tool that can be used well. Having said that, it is also true that a number of users use the anonymity of the internet to poke fun or ridicule personalities or ideas. Some of it is downright abuse. One solution is to complain to Twitter which will act in blocking the abusive person or cancelling the account. While you need to be serious with Facebook and not take it for granted, posting anything you want, the same applies to Twitter. Maybe, you may want to go back and look at your previous tweets and delete some of them as this is not how you want people to see you.

Pay attention to grammar and punctuation though it might just be a sentence. Read your tweet before you post. It must be a tightly written one with content. Have something to say. Do not tweet for the sake of it.

Make use of hash tags. These # symbols are created to trend a topic. You can use a hash tag to join a discussion. Retweet a tweet which makes sense to you and makes you feel that many others need to read it. Retweeting also helps you get connections and increase the size of your followers. Follow your followers and if you stumble on a link of an article that is worth reading, share it with them. If intelligent tweeting groups get together it will be such fun to intellectually stimulate conversation and evolution of ideas.

Promote your twitter handle as much as you can, but not all the time as it may irritate your friends and followers. Use your sense of judgment.

E-BOOKS

An e-book or an electronic book is the digital form of a book that can be read on your computer or Smartphone. It is essentially a digital file. Now, you can even read a book on your Smartphone while travelling. Many of them are available free and can be downloaded from various internet sites. You can also buy e-books. Many use their tablets to read e-books now. The future will surprise us with new inventions.

PODCASTS

A podcast is a digital media file downloaded from a streaming Internet source. It can be downloaded on to a Smartphone, a computer or a Mac. Simply put, it is a prerecorded program on the internet hosted by a podcaster who might introduce the subject and then interview an expert helping you get a wider perspective on the issue. It could be a celebrity talking about their work or lives. The easiest way to find a podcast is through a dedicated podcasting app. All you need is a Smartphone or a tablet.

It can be spread across a series of episodes. For instance, someone can pick up history as a theme and can make multiple episodes on it for years. All you need is a computer or a Smartphone and an internet connection to make and distribute podcasts. It is slowly picking up in India as podcasters and media organisations elsewhere are using podcasts to tell stories. Podcasts are now also being used by companies to advertise their business and inform customers about their offerings hoping that customers would then be convinced about the need to try out their products.

4.9 SUMMING UP

- Blogging has become a common mode of expression. Thanks to the new media, every writer can now be a publisher.
- The multi-media journalist has to multitask. He or she has to research, write, shoot, edit and deliver the multimedia story that will be carried by print, television, radio and the internet. Each of them will have to be written and told differently.
- Facebook should be carefully managed. Do not write carelessly on this social media platform as you are leaving your footprint there.
- Readers on the web like their information delivered fast. Writing a story using bullet points works well on the web.
- Content writing is becoming a big industry by itself. Scores of institutions and companies are looking for content writers to boost content on their websites.
- It is not just writing that one needs to master as one needs to understand search engine optimization to ensure that searches pick up the content you write.

- Digital ethics are paramount as plagiarism is spreading. So is fake news.
- Clearly, new media is the future. However, there are numerous online challenges but it can be tackled with careful planning and strategy.
- One positive aspect is the birth of long form narratives that the web carries today which gives depth to the reader who wishes to have it.
- Twitter is something no writer or journalist can now ignore as the micro-blogging platform has wide impact. It can be effectively used to spread information and views.
- E-Books and Podcasts also open windows of opportunity for writers and it is bound to grow.

4.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- (i) The blog must be well-written with short sentences and paragraphs. It must be tightly written and editing and rewriting should ensure that. It can have photographs that tell the story or even have a video that underlines the point you are making. It needs a smart headline that can be picked up by SEO. Use keywords in the blog to ensure search engines find it when someone searches those words. It must have a logical structure. The opening paragraph must persuade the reader to read the piece. Have a good conclusion.

Check Your Progress 2

- (i) In a multimedia story, a news report will have to be written on how the price of tomatoes has gone up. It will detail the reasons why and what people feel about it. Then, another visual story will be done on the same subject using the same information but it will have to be shot along with interviews and possibly a piece to camera by the reporter. Then, another script will have to be written for the radio and another script for an online story that could have both the written word and the video incorporated into it.