

**anchor:** on-set personality who reads the text of the most important news stories; the anchor sets the tone of the newscast and introduces and closes most reports

**correspondent:** news reporter or writer operating in a separate location from the news headquarters who gives regular reports

**field reporter:** reporter who reports from the location of the story; field reporters bring viewers to the scene and help make the event seem more immediate and credible

**graphic:** visual device, such as a chart, a graph, or an illustration; graphics help illustrate details of the news

**news director:** person in charge of a news department; the news director may have the final approval of which stories are aired, the order in which they are aired, and the amount of time allotted to each story

**news hole:** time frame that remains for reporting news stories; a typical 30-minute newscast consists of only 12 to 15 minutes of news, apart from the weather reports, sports updates, and commercials

**sound bite:** brief quotation excerpted from a longer statement in an interview or speech; sound bites are usually combined with video footage

**teaser:** brief mention of an upcoming report; teasers are used to keep viewers tuned in to the newscast and are frequently read prior to commercials

**video footage:** recorded videotape, including interviews and on-the-scene shots

**voice-over:** news anchor or reporter's voice heard over the video footage

Millions of people learn about current and national events by watching newscasts. However, most viewers do not understand how a newscast is created or how the information is conveyed. Understanding TV newscasts will help you analyze the information you receive and form educated opinions about the issues that affect you.

**HERE'S HOW**

**Strategy 1: Recognize the actual time devoted to the news.** A typical newscast airs for 30 minutes, yet only 12 to 15 minutes are devoted to news. News directors must select which stories to air, in which order they air, and how much time each report is allotted.

- Take note of the lead story. Ask yourself why a certain story leads.
- Consider the length of time devoted to each story. How much information can reporters convey in 20 to 60 seconds? Should more time be devoted to a report?

**Strategy 2: Notice the anchor.** The anchor sets the tone of the newscast. How a viewer responds to the anchor often determines whether he or she will continue to watch that newscast.

- Notice how the anchor introduces and closes stories. What does the anchor want you to discern about the story?
- Be aware of the anchor's attitude and mannerisms. The tone of the anchor's voice and his or her facial expressions signal the significance of a story.

**Strategy 3: Understand how information is conveyed.** News directors have several tools to help them present the news and captivate an audience.

- Take note of the field reporter. Ask yourself why the reporter is on the scene.
- Consider the video footage. Stations often cover stories that contain compelling video footage—even if the story isn't necessarily newsworthy.
- Listen to sound bites and music. Are the sound bites taken out of context, or do they seem to oversimplify the issue? Does the music create a mood?

**Strategy 4: Note how newscasts use soft news.** Human-interest stories and soft news get an audience's attention. News shows often use human-interest stories as teasers before commercial breaks to entice viewers to stay tuned.

**Directions:** Record a local or a national newscast. Watch it, using the first chart to track the stories and the time allotted to each report. Then choose one story, and view it several more times. Use the second chart to analyze how the story was presented. If you need more room, continue your notes on the back of this sheet.

Story	Subject	Length of Time
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
<b>Teasers:</b>		

FOCUS ON STORY # _____	My Notes _____
<b>Anchor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was your initial impression of the anchor?</li> <li>• Did the anchor's tone affect the story? How?</li> <li>• How did he or she lead into and close the story?</li> </ul>	
<b>Video Footage</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What made the video footage compelling or dull?</li> <li>• Did it help you understand or relate to the story? Why or why not?</li> <li>• What could have been shown instead?</li> </ul>	
<b>Sound Bites</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did sound bites convey information?</li> <li>• Did the sound bites help you understand the story?</li> <li>• Did the sound bites seem biased or inflammatory? Why or why not?</li> </ul>	
<b>Field Reporter</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What made the reporter effective or ineffective?</li> <li>• How would you describe the reporter's tone?</li> <li>• How did he or she frame the story?</li> </ul>	

**Analyzing TV News**

**Directions:** Record a local newscast and a national newscast from the same day and similar times. Watch each newscast several times, or use the pause and rewind functions when needed. Complete the chart to compare and contrast the two newscasts. If you need more room for your comparison, use the back of this sheet.

	<b>National News</b> Station: _____ Time: _____	<b>Local News</b> Station: _____ Time: _____
<b>Lead Story</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How was the lead story introduced?</li> <li>How long was it?</li> </ul>		
<b>Other Stories</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What kinds of stories were covered?</li> <li>How much time did they receive?</li> <li>Were they hard or soft news?</li> </ul>		
<b>Anchor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How did the anchor's posture, clothes, and facial expressions contribute to the newscast?</li> <li>How would you describe the tone of the anchor?</li> </ul>		
<b>News Team</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How effective were the field reporters?</li> <li>How did the reporters help set the tone of the story?</li> </ul>		
<b>Music and Graphics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What mood did music create?</li> <li>Did the graphics add helpful information? Why or why not?</li> </ul>		
<b>Teasers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What kinds of stories were the teasers promoting?</li> <li>How effective were the teasers in keeping you interested?</li> </ul>		