



Unit 2: Broadcasting & Journalism Technical Skills

**Preparation for the NOCTI
Broadcasting & Journalism Exam**

In this unit, you'll dive into the core technical skills used in broadcasting and journalism — from setting up microphones and cameras to logging footage, writing scripts, and editing content. You'll explore how to plan, shoot, and build effective news packages, as well as the tools and file formats used to bring stories to life. Whether you're working in front of the camera or behind the scenes, these skills form the backbone of real-world media production.

This unit represents approximately 19% of the NOCTI Broadcasting & Journalism exam.

Section 1: Unit Vocabulary

Term: Anchor

Definition:

The main presenter of a news broadcast. Anchors read the news on camera, introduce stories, interact with reporters, and guide the overall flow of the newscast. They are often the “face” of the program and help establish trust with the audience.

Example:

The anchor might say: “Good evening. Our top story tonight — a major development in the city’s flood recovery efforts.”

Why It Matters:

Anchors are more than just readers — they must be skilled communicators, stay calm under pressure, and understand the rundown and timing of the show. On the NOCTI, you may be asked what an anchor does, how they differ from a reporter, or how they work with producers and directors.

Term: Attribution

Definition:

The act of naming or citing the source of information, quotes, or claims in a news story. It tells the audience where the information came from and helps ensure accuracy, transparency, and trust.

Example:

Instead of just saying, “The school is changing its dress code,” you use attribution: “According to the superintendent, the school is changing its dress code.”

Why It Matters:

Attribution gives credit where it’s due and lets the audience evaluate the reliability of the information. In broadcast, attribution usually comes before the information (e.g., “Police say...”). On the NOCTI test, you may be asked to choose the most ethical or effective use of attribution in a script.

 **Term: B-Roll****Definition:**

Supplemental video footage used to support a news story or interview. It helps visually explain what the anchor or reporter is talking about, adds variety to the visuals, and keeps the viewer engaged.

Example: If the story is about a school board meeting, the B-roll might include footage of the meeting room, people taking notes, or students walking through the halls — while the reporter talks over it (called a voiceover or VO).

Why It Matters:

B-roll brings a story to life. It covers edits, adds context, and keeps the viewer from just staring at a talking head. In your NOCTI prep — and in real-world production — B-roll is a critical storytelling tool.

 **Term: Backtiming****Definition:**

The process of calculating the timing of a newscast or segment in reverse, starting from the scheduled end time and working backward. It ensures that the entire show fits perfectly into its time slot — down to the second.

Example:

If a show must end at exactly 6:30 PM, the producer uses backtiming to figure out when each segment must start so everything fits — including commercials, weather, and tosses.

Why It Matters:

Broadcasts run on strict time slots, especially on live TV. Backtiming helps producers and directors keep everything on schedule. If one segment runs long, something else may need to be shortened or dropped. On the NOCTI, you may be asked what backtiming is, how it's used, or how it affects production planning.

 **Term: Bridge****Definition:**

A short on-camera appearance by the reporter within a package that connects two parts of the story. It helps guide the viewer from one section to another and often adds context, updates, or clarifies what's coming next.

Example:

After a sound bite, the reporter appears on screen and says: "While the cleanup continues, officials say more rain could delay progress." This brief moment acts as a "bridge" between interviews, B-roll, or key story developments.

Why It Matters:

A bridge keeps the story flowing smoothly and lets the reporter add their voice and presence. It's often used to clarify complex events or explain what's about to happen. On the NOCTI test, you might be asked to identify a bridge or explain how it improves story structure.

 **Term: Bumper****Definition:**

A short video or audio clip — often with music, a logo, or quick animation — used to signal a transition, usually before or after a commercial break. It helps maintain the show's flow and lets viewers know the program is continuing.

Example:

Before going to a commercial, the newscast might play a 5-second bumper showing the station's logo with a music cue.

Why It Matters:

Bumpers give a professional polish to broadcasts, help brand the station or show, and give the control room time to manage transitions smoothly. On the NOCTI, you may be asked what a bumper is, when to use one, or how it fits into the show's structure.

Term: Chyron

Definition:

Originally a brand name, “Chyron” is now commonly used to describe any on-screen graphic in a newscast — like lower thirds, name tags, scoreboards, or headlines. These graphics are usually added by a character generator (CG) in the control room.

Example:

When you see a name and title pop up under someone during an interview — that’s a chyron.

Why It Matters:

Chyrons help deliver important information without interrupting the broadcast. They keep the audience informed and oriented. On the NOCTI, you may be asked what a chyron is, how it’s used, or how it supports visual storytelling.

Term: Cold Open

Definition:

The start of a broadcast or segment that jumps straight into the story without playing the usual title sequence, theme music, or opening graphics. It’s used to grab the viewer’s attention immediately — especially for breaking news or dramatic moments.

Example:

Instead of starting with “Good evening, I’m Sarah Green,” the newscast opens with: “We begin tonight with breaking news — a tornado has touched down just west of town.”

Why It Matters:

Cold opens create a sense of urgency or importance and are often used to prioritize major stories. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked to identify the purpose of a cold open or explain why a producer might choose to use one instead of a traditional intro.

Term: Control Room

Definition:

The behind-the-scenes technical hub where the producer, director, audio engineer, graphics operator, and other crew members manage the entire broadcast. From here, they control what goes on air — including camera feeds, audio levels, graphics, and timing.

Example:

While the anchor is live on camera, the control room is switching shots, cueing video clips, adjusting sound, and rolling graphics — all in real time.

Why It Matters:

The control room is where a newscast comes together. It's fast-paced, highly coordinated, and essential for smooth, professional broadcasts. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked who works in the control room or what tasks are handled there during a live show.

 **Term: Copy****Definition:**

The written script that anchors or reporters read during a newscast. It includes all spoken lines, as well as directions for how the story should be delivered. Copy must be clear, accurate, and sound natural when spoken out loud.

Example:

An anchor's copy might say:

“Bellville ISD is launching a new after-school program for students needing extra help in math and reading.”

Why It Matters:

Good copy is the backbone of a newscast. It needs to be written in a conversational tone, use short sentences, and avoid complicated words. On the NOCTI test, expect questions about how copy is written, edited, and used on-air.

 **Term: Cue****Definition:**

A signal — either verbal, visual, or electronic — that tells someone when to start or stop a broadcast action. Cues are used in the studio and in the field to coordinate timing between anchors, reporters, directors, and camera operators.

Example:

The floor director might point at the anchor to cue them to begin reading. In the control room, the producer may say “Roll VO” to cue the video playback.

Why It Matters:

Cues keep everyone in sync during a live or recorded show. Without them, you get awkward pauses, missed camera switches, or people talking over each other. Knowing how to give and respond to cues is essential for working on a professional set.

 **Term: ENG (Electronic News Gathering)****Definition:**

A term used to describe the use of portable video, audio, and broadcasting equipment for reporting news outside the studio — such as at crime scenes, community events, or natural disasters. ENG teams typically include a reporter and a videographer working quickly on location.

Example:

A reporter and camera operator rush to the scene of a house fire with a shoulder-mounted camera, wireless mic, and portable light — that's an ENG setup.

Why It Matters:

ENG allows journalists to bring breaking news straight to viewers with speed and flexibility. It's the backbone of field reporting. On the NOCTI, you may be asked what ENG equipment includes, how it's used in the field, or how it differs from studio production.

 **Term: Fact-Checking****Definition:**

The process of verifying that all information in a story is accurate, current, and backed by credible sources — before it's published or aired. This includes checking names, dates, quotes, statistics, and claims.

Example:

Before reporting that a school board passed a new policy, a journalist should check the official meeting minutes or confirm with a spokesperson to ensure it really happened — and that the details are correct.

Why It Matters:

Fact-checking protects a news outlet's credibility and prevents the spread of false or misleading information. Mistakes can damage trust, cause legal issues, or mislead the

public. On the NOCTI, you might be asked how to verify a source or identify what needs to be fact-checked in a script.

Term: Floor Director

Definition:

The person on set who acts as the link between the control room and the on-air talent. The floor director gives visual or spoken cues to anchors and guests, manages timing, signals when to start or stop talking, and keeps everything on track during a live or recorded production.

Example:

The floor director might count down with hand signals, point to the anchor to cue them to begin, or hold up a sign that says “Wrap” to end a segment.

Why It Matters:

The floor director keeps the on-set team in sync with the control room. They make sure talent hits their marks, reads copy at the right time, and stays within time limits. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked what a floor director does or how they help coordinate a live broadcast.

Term: Hit

Definition:

A short, scheduled live or recorded segment that airs during a newscast. A hit can be a quick update, live check-in, weather brief, or traffic report. It’s usually just 30 seconds to 2 minutes long.

Example:

A reporter might do a live hit from the county fair to give a quick update on attendance and events.

Why It Matters:

Hits are used to keep shows fresh, flexible, and responsive to breaking news. Reporters and producers must time hits precisely to avoid running over or cutting into other segments. On the NOCTI test, you might be asked what a hit is or how it fits into a broadcast schedule.

Term: Hot Mic

Definition:

A microphone that is live and actively transmitting sound — sometimes without the speaker realizing it. This can happen before or after a segment, during a break, or when someone thinks they're off-air. A hot mic can pick up unintended or private comments.

Example:

An anchor finishes a segment, thinks they're off-air, and makes a joke — but the mic is still hot and it goes out live.

Why It Matters:

Hot mic moments can lead to embarrassing mistakes, damage credibility, or even cause legal trouble if something inappropriate is broadcast. On the NOCTI, you might be asked how to avoid hot mic situations or why they're a major concern in live broadcasting.

Term: IFB (Interruptible Foldback)

Definition:

A small earpiece worn by on-air talent that lets producers or directors speak to them in real time during a live broadcast. It's how anchors get time cues, last-minute changes, or breaking updates while still delivering the news.

Example:

While reading the news, the anchor might hear the producer in their IFB say, "We're skipping the next story — toss to weather."

Why It Matters:

The IFB keeps talent connected to the control room without interrupting the flow of the show. It's a key tool in live broadcasting, where timing and communication are critical. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked what an IFB does, who uses it, or how it supports smooth live production.

Term: Inverted Pyramid

Definition:

A writing structure where the most important information comes first, followed by supporting details in decreasing order of importance. This format helps editors cut from the bottom without losing key facts, and it ensures the audience understands the most

critical parts of the story right away. In broadcast, this approach keeps scripts tight and focused, helping the anchor get straight to the point before time runs out. It's especially useful in fast-paced news environments.

Example:

Top: Who, What, When, Where, Why, How

Middle: Quotes, background info, supporting facts

Bottom: Extra context or less-important details

Why It Matters:

Broadcast time is limited. If the audience only hears the first 10 seconds of your story, they should still walk away informed.

 **Term: Jump Cut**

Definition:

An abrupt, visually jarring transition between two shots that are framed similarly but show a noticeable change — like a person suddenly shifting position without explanation. It breaks the smooth flow of video and can be distracting if not used on purpose.

Example:

If you film someone talking and cut from one moment to another without changing camera angles or perspective, their head may suddenly jump from one side of the frame to the other — that's a jump cut.

Why It Matters:

In broadcast journalism, jump cuts are usually avoided unless used for stylistic effect in fast-paced segments. A clean edit helps maintain continuity and professionalism. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked to recognize editing mistakes or describe how to fix them — and jump cuts often come up.

 **Term: Lead (Lede)**

Definition:

The opening sentence or paragraph of a news story. It's designed to grab the viewer's or listener's attention and summarize the most important information right away — usually answering the "who, what, when, where, and why." In broadcast, a lead needs to be clear, short, and engaging because you only have a few seconds to hook the audience.

Example:

(Broadcast): “A fire at a Bellville apartment complex has left five families without homes tonight.”

Why It Matters:

The lead sets the tone and direction of the story. A strong lead helps the audience instantly understand what the story is about and why it matters. On the NOCT test, you may be asked to identify a strong lead or rewrite one to improve clarity and impact.

 **Term: Lead-In****Definition:**

A short introduction read by the anchor that sets up a package, live report, or VO/SOT. It gives the audience just enough context to understand what’s coming — usually including the topic and sometimes who’s reporting.

Example:

Anchor: “Students at Bellville High are raising money for a classmate in need. Reporter Jordan Lee has the story.” That sentence is the lead-in — it hands the story off to the next part of the broadcast.

Why It Matters:

A strong lead-in grabs attention and sets the tone. It helps the audience stay oriented and prepares them for what they’re about to see. On the NOCTI, you may be asked to write a lead-in, recognize one in a script, or explain how it connects to the package.

 **Term: Lower Third****Definition:**

An on-screen graphic that appears in the lower part of the screen during a broadcast. It typically shows a person’s name, title, location, or additional information related to the story being presented.

Example:

During an interview, the lower third might say: **Jane Smith — Bellville Fire Chief**

Why It Matters:

Lower thirds help identify who's speaking, clarify what's happening, or give extra details without interrupting the broadcast. They're a key part of visual storytelling. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked what a lower third is, when to use one, or how it improves viewer understanding.

 **Term: Mic Check****Definition:**

A quick test done before recording or going live to make sure a microphone is working properly. During a mic check, the talent speaks into the mic while the audio engineer listens for clarity, volume level, background noise, and technical issues.

Example:

Before the show begins, the floor director asks the anchor to say, "Check one-two, check one-two" to confirm the mic is live and sounds good.

Why It Matters:

Mic checks help prevent audio problems during a broadcast. A clear mic ensures the audience can hear every word — and catches issues before they become embarrassing or unfixable. On the NOCTI, you may be asked when a mic check happens or what problems it helps avoid.

 **Term: MOS (Man on the Street)****Definition:**

A type of interview where a reporter asks everyday people — usually random passersby — for their opinions or reactions to a topic. These interviews are unscripted, informal, and often recorded in public places.

Example:

A reporter stops shoppers outside a grocery store to ask: "How do you feel about rising food prices?"

Why It Matters:

MOS interviews add real voices and community perspectives to a story. They're quick to produce and give the audience a sense of public opinion. On the NOCTI, you may be asked what MOS stands for, how it's used, or what kind of story it works best in.

Term: Nat Sound

Definition:

Short for “natural sound,” this refers to the real-life background audio captured at the scene of a story — like crowd noise, birds chirping, sirens, or applause. It’s recorded on location and helps create a sense of place and realism in a news segment.

Example:

In a package about a football game, nat sound might include the roar of the crowd, the whistle of the referee, or the marching band playing.

Why It Matters:

Nat sound draws the viewer into the story and makes it feel more authentic. It can be used under voiceovers, between interviews, or in standalone sound moments. On the NOCTI test, expect questions about how nat sound enhances storytelling or when to use it effectively.

Term: Newsworthiness

Definition:

The set of criteria journalists use to decide whether a story is important or interesting enough to report. These factors help determine if a story will inform, engage, or impact the audience.

Common factors include:

Timeliness – Is it happening now or very recently?

Proximity – Is it local or connected to your community?

Impact – Does it affect a large number of people?

Conflict – Is there a disagreement, tension, or problem?

Human Interest – Is it emotional, inspiring, or surprising?

Prominence – Does it involve someone well-known?

Example:

A story about a local teacher winning a national award is newsworthy because it has local relevance, human interest, and prominence.

Why It Matters:

Newsworthiness helps reporters choose which stories to cover and how to prioritize them in a newscast. On the NOCTI exam, you might be asked to identify which story is more newsworthy or which elements make a story worth covering.

Term: On Background

Definition:

Information shared by a source that can be used in the story, but cannot be directly attributed to that person by name. The journalist can report the information, but must keep the source's identity confidential.

Example:

A government official tells a reporter details about a new policy, but says it can only be reported “on background.” The reporter might write: “Sources within the administration say the policy will be announced next week.”

Why It Matters:

“On background” allows journalists to report sensitive or insider information while protecting their sources. However, it also raises ethical questions about credibility and transparency. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked to distinguish between on the record, off the record, and on background — and how to handle each appropriately.

Term: Over-the-Shoulder (OTS)

Definition:

A graphic or video box that appears on screen next to the anchor's head — usually in the top corner — while they're reading a story. It's used to visually support what the anchor is saying without taking over the full screen.

Example:

During a story about rising gas prices, a graphic showing a fuel pump and “GAS PRICES UP” might appear over the anchor's shoulder.

Why It Matters:

OTS graphics give the audience a visual cue about the story without switching away from the anchor. They add professionalism and help viewers quickly understand what the segment is about. On the NOCTI, you may be asked to identify an OTS or explain its purpose in a newscast.

Term: Package

Definition:

A complete, pre-recorded news segment that includes a reporter's narration (voiceover), sound bites from interviews (SOTs), B-roll footage, and sometimes on-camera appearances by the reporter. Packages are edited ahead of time and usually run 1–2 minutes.

Example:

A package about a school fundraiser might open with narration, show B-roll of the event, include a student soundbite, and close with the reporter signing off.

Why It Matters:

Packages are the main storytelling tool in broadcast journalism. They let reporters build a full story with structure, emotion, and visuals — and they're a major focus of the job, where you'll need to understand how to write, organize, and edit them.

Term: Producer

Definition:

The person responsible for organizing the entire newscast. The producer builds the rundown, assigns stories to reporters, chooses the order of segments, writes copy, times the show, and makes sure everything runs smoothly from start to finish.

Example:

A producer decides which story goes first, coordinates with the weather team, tells the director when to roll video, and alerts the anchor to breaking news through IFB — all while keeping the show on time.

Why It Matters:

The producer is the behind-the-scenes boss of the newscast. Without a producer, the show would fall apart. On the NOCTI exam, expect questions about who builds the rundown, manages story flow, or makes editorial decisions — that's the producer's role.

Term: Rundown

Definition:

A structured outline or schedule that lists every segment in a newscast — in the exact order they will appear. It includes timing, story titles (slugs), who's reading what, and

what videos or graphics are needed. The producer uses the rundown to control the show's flow and keep everything on time.

Example:

A rundown might show:

- 00:00 – Show open
- 00:15 – Anchor reads VO about a weather alert
- 01:00 – Package: Local election coverage
- 02:30 – SOT from the county judge
- 03:00 – Tease for upcoming story

Why It Matters:

A good rundown keeps the show organized and on time. Everyone — anchors, producers, directors, camera operators — relies on it. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked how rundowns help with teamwork, time management, and smooth broadcasts.

 **Term: Shot Sheet**

Definition:

A list that describes each camera shot needed for a segment, scene, or full production. It outlines what should be filmed, from what angle, and in what order — helping the camera crew, director, and editor stay on the same page during filming.

Example:

A shot sheet might include:

- Shot 1 – Wide shot of school exterior
- Shot 2 – Medium shot of students entering
- Shot 3 – Close-up of principal speaking

Why It Matters:

A shot sheet keeps filming organized and efficient. It helps prevent missed shots, saves time during editing, and ensures the story is told visually. On the NOCTI, you might be asked what a shot sheet is used for, who uses it, or how it supports production planning.

Term: Slug

Definition:

A short title or label used in the newsroom to identify a story, script, or segment in the rundown. It's usually just a few words that make it easy for producers, anchors, and crew to quickly recognize what the story is about.

Example:

A story about a school board vote might have the slug: SCHOOL BUDGET Slugs are used in rundowns, teleprompters, scripts, and newsroom software — but they don't appear on screen during the broadcast.

Why It Matters:

Slugs keep the newsroom organized and efficient. Everyone knows which story is which at a glance. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked what a slug does, where it appears, or how it helps with planning a show.

Term: Sound Bite

Definition:

A short audio or video clip taken from an interview, speech, or public statement. It highlights a key quote or emotional reaction and is usually used in a news package or newscast to give the story authenticity and personality.

Example:

A student says, "We worked really hard for this, and it feels amazing to win!"

Why It Matters: Sound bites make your story feel real and personal. Instead of just reporting what happened, you let people hear it directly from the source. In broadcast journalism, sound bites are carefully chosen to be clear, emotional, and brief — usually under 10 seconds.

Term: Stand-Up

Definition:

An on-camera appearance by a reporter within a news package. In a standup, the reporter delivers a short piece of the story directly to the camera, often from the field or on location.

Example:

A reporter might appear on camera in front of a flooded street and say: *“Crews here are working around the clock to clear debris and restore power to this neighborhood.”*

Why It Matters:

Standups show that the reporter is on the scene and help build trust with the audience. They add energy, credibility, and a personal touch to a story. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked how standups fit into a package and what makes one effective.

 **Term: Switcher****Definition:**

A piece of equipment — and sometimes the person operating it — that selects which camera, video clip, or graphic goes live on screen during a broadcast. It’s used to switch between different video sources in real time.

Example:

During a newscast, the switcher operator might cut from the anchor’s camera to a weather graphic, then to a live field reporter — all at the right moments.

Why It Matters:

The switcher is essential for producing smooth, professional broadcasts. It helps control the visual flow of the show. On the NOCTI, you may be asked what a switcher does, who uses it, or how it fits into the control room team.

 **Term: Talent****Definition:**

A general term for the people who appear on camera or on-air in a broadcast — including anchors, reporters, hosts, correspondents, and sometimes guests. “Talent” refers to the faces and voices the audience sees and hears.

Example:

The anchor, sports reporter, and weather person are all considered talent during a live newscast.

Why It Matters:

Talent plays a key role in delivering the news clearly, confidently, and professionally. They must be good communicators and work closely with the crew to follow scripts, hit cues, and stay on time. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked who the talent is in a production or what responsibilities they hold.

Term: Tease

Definition:

A short preview of a story that's coming up later in the newscast. It's designed to grab the viewer's attention and make them want to keep watching.

Example:

"Coming up — a local dog becomes a TikTok star. You won't believe what he can do!"
Teases are usually delivered before commercial breaks or early in the show to build interest and increase viewer retention.

Why It Matters:

Teases are marketing tools built into the newscast. They create suspense and give the audience a reason to stay tuned. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked how teases are used strategically in show flow and audience engagement.

Term: Teleprompter

Definition:

A screen that displays the script for anchors or on-air talent to read while looking directly into the camera. The words scroll at a steady pace so the speaker can stay on track without looking down at paper.

Example:

The anchor reads the opening news story from a teleprompter while maintaining eye contact with the audience — creating a smooth and professional delivery.

Why It Matters:

Teleprompters help on-air talent focus on presentation instead of memorization. They improve pacing, reduce mistakes, and maintain viewer engagement. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked how teleprompters are used, who controls them, or why they're important to broadcast performance.

Term: Toss

Definition:

A smooth, scripted transition where an anchor hands off the broadcast to another person — usually a reporter, meteorologist, or co-anchor — or to a different segment like sports or weather.

Example:

Anchor: *“Now let’s go live to Maria Lopez, who’s at the scene of the fire. Maria?”* That handoff is called a toss.

Why It Matters:

Tosses help keep the broadcast flowing naturally. They signal a shift in the show without awkward pauses and give the next person a chance to jump in seamlessly. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked how or when a toss is used, or to identify it in a script.

Term: VO (Voiceover)

Definition:

A type of narration where the anchor or reporter speaks while the audience sees B-roll or other video — but the speaker isn’t shown on camera. It helps guide the viewer through a story while visuals play.

Example:

While showing footage of storm damage, the anchor says, “Cleanup efforts are underway after last night’s severe weather left thousands without power.”

Why It Matters:

Voiceovers keep the story moving and let reporters add facts or context while keeping the visuals active. In broadcasting, VO is one of the most common formats you’ll work with, especially for shorter stories or daily updates.

Term: VO/NAT

Definition:

A broadcast segment that combines an anchor or reporter’s voiceover (VO) with natural sound (NAT) from the video footage. The reporter narrates part of the story, then pauses to let the natural background audio — like crowd noise, sirens, or ambient sounds — play through to enhance the scene.

Example:

While showing footage of a marching band, the reporter says: “The Bellville High Band led the parade downtown...” Then pauses as the music and crowd sounds take over for a few seconds — that’s the NAT.

Why It Matters:

VO/NAT segments give the story a more immersive, realistic feel by letting the natural environment speak for itself. They’re common in packages, especially for events with strong sound presence. On the NOCTI, you may be asked to identify a VO/NAT segment or explain how it adds to storytelling.

 **Term: VO/SOT****Definition:**

A broadcast news segment format that combines a voiceover (VO) with a sound bite (SOT). The anchor or reporter begins by narrating over B-roll (the VO), then the segment cuts to a recorded interview clip (the SOT) — usually someone speaking directly on camera.

Example:

The anchor says: “Fire crews responded quickly to contain the blaze.”

[Cut to SOT of Fire Chief]: “We had the flames under control within 15 minutes.”

Why It Matters:

VO/SOTs are one of the most common segment types in newscasts. They’re fast, informative, and add credibility by letting viewers hear directly from the source. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked to identify a VO/SOT, understand how it’s structured, or know when it’s used in a broadcast.

 **Term: VOA (Voice of Authority)****Definition:**

Short for “Voice of Authority,” this refers to a quote or source used in a story that adds credibility because the person is an expert, official, or holds a position of knowledge or leadership. These sources strengthen the story by offering trusted insight or confirmation.

Example:

A doctor explaining vaccine side effects, or a police chief confirming details about an investigation, would both be considered Voices of Authority.

Why It Matters:

Using a Voice of Authority helps the audience take the story seriously and trust the information. It also shows the reporter did their research and found credible sources. On the NOCTI test, you may be asked which source qualifies as a VOA or how it supports ethical, accurate reporting.

Section 2: The Role of Technical Skills in Modern Journalism

In today's fast-paced media landscape, technical skills are no longer optional—they are essential. While the heart of journalism still lies in clear writing and ethical storytelling, the ability to use the tools of the trade confidently and correctly sets modern broadcasters apart. Whether you're anchoring a live show, producing a field package, or scripting a local segment, understanding the technical side of the process is just as important as the content itself.

Technical skills refer to the practical abilities that allow a journalist to gather, produce, and deliver stories across platforms. This includes operating cameras, understanding how a teleprompter works, editing footage, managing rundowns, cueing segments, and delivering content that is both accurate and visually compelling. As Miss Evelin Kholeli emphasizes, modern journalists must blend “clarity, urgency, and structure” with fluency in tools like digital editing systems, broadcast software, and multimedia platforms.

Chris Schneider, writer of “Starting Your Career in Broadcasting”, reinforces this idea by reminding aspiring broadcasters that you don't just “talk into a mic”—you prepare, write, format, rehearse, and often troubleshoot technical components yourself, especially in smaller markets or student productions. Understanding production workflows and the expectations of roles like producer, director, and editor helps you perform more effectively both on and off camera.

More importantly, technical skills empower journalists to maintain control of their message. A well-written story can fall flat if the audio isn't clear, the video is shaky, or the timing is off. Mastery of tools like voiceover timing, proper mic use, basic lighting, and B-roll planning ensures the story is told the way it was meant to be told.

In summary, the role of technical skills in journalism is to support the storytelling process from start to finish. They make the difference between a rough draft and a professional production.

For anyone looking to succeed in broadcasting - whether as a reporter, anchor, or producer - developing strong technical skills is not just recommended; it's required.

Section 3: Writing for Broadcast vs. Print: What's the Difference?

Broadcast and print journalism share the same mission: to inform the public. But how they do that — and how journalists write for each — is very different. Understanding the difference is essential to writing for broadcast effectively.

Broadcast	Print
Written to be heard	Written to be read
Short, simple sentences	Can use longer, complex sentences
Conversational tone	Professional, sometimes academic tone
Present tense preferred	Past tense common
Attribution comes first	Attribution comes after
Relies on sound and visuals	Relies on detail and context
Meant for immediate impact	Allows for deeper reading and re-reading

In broadcast, you have one chance to make your message clear. The viewer or listener can't reread your sentence. If it doesn't make sense the first time, it's lost.



Real-World Example: Print vs. Broadcast

Print Version:

On Thursday afternoon, the Bellville City Council convened to discuss ongoing budget concerns, ultimately passing a revised ordinance following public comment.

Broadcast Version:

BELLVILLE CITY COUNCIL MET THURSDAY TO PASS A REVISED BUDGET AFTER HEARING FROM THE PUBLIC.



Notice the differences:

- Shorter sentence

- Active voice
- Present tense
- Attribution at the beginning
- Easier to read aloud

Practice Activity: Rewrite It for Broadcast

Print-style sentence:

The library will host a community book fair this Saturday beginning at 9 a.m., featuring local authors and children's activities.

Your Broadcast Rewrite:

[Write here.]




Why It Matters


Learning to write for the ear — not the eye — is one of the biggest shifts for future broadcasters. A good print writer informs. A good broadcast writer connects instantly and clearly. Mastering this skill will help you perform stronger on the NOCTI Test — and even stronger in the real world of journalism.

Section 4: Broadcast Writing Essentials

To succeed in broadcast writing, keep the following key rules in mind:

Key Rules for Broadcast Writing

- Keep sentences short. Aim for 10–12 words max.
- Use everyday language. Write how you talk.
- Avoid jargon. Unless your audience uses the term daily, explain it or leave it out.
- Use the present tense whenever possible — it makes stories feel immediate.
- Put attribution at the beginning.
 -  Say: "Police say the suspect ran away."
 -  Not: "The suspect ran away, police said."
- Round off big numbers. Say "about 3,000 people" instead of "3,017."
- Use active voice.
 -  "The fire destroyed the house."

-  "The house was destroyed by the fire."
- Let visuals do some of the work. Don't describe what viewers can already see.
- Write for the ear. Read your script out loud. If it sounds awkward, rewrite it.
- Mark pauses and emphasis. Helps with delivery, timing, and tone.

Broadcast Tips from the Pros

"If it sounds like an essay, rewrite it. If it sounds like a conversation, you're good." ~ Chris Schneider

"Clarity over complexity — your job is to make the story stick, not to sound smart." ~ Miss Evelin Kholeli

Print vs. Broadcast Example

Print Version:

On Tuesday afternoon, Bellville police responded to a burglary on Holland Street. According to the department, two suspects broke in through a back window and stole several electronics before fleeing the scene. Police are reviewing surveillance video and say they expect to make an arrest by the end of the week.

Broadcast Version:

BELLVILLE POLICE SAY TWO PEOPLE BROKE INTO A HOME ON HOLLAND STREET TUESDAY AFTERNOON. THEY GOT IN THROUGH A BACK WINDOW AND TOOK SEVERAL ELECTRONICS. INVESTIGATORS ARE REVIEWING SURVEILLANCE VIDEO AND EXPECT TO MAKE AN ARREST SOON.

Key Differences:

- All caps improve readability on teleprompters.
- Sentences are shorter.
- Present tense adds immediacy.
- Attribution comes first.
- Language is more direct and conversational.

Practice Activity

Task 1: Rewrite for Broadcast

Convert this print-style paragraph into a broadcast script:


The Bellville High School band will host its annual fall concert on Thursday at 7 p.m. in the school auditorium. The performance will include selections from the marching season and several student-led ensembles. Tickets are \$5 at the door.

Your Rewrite (Broadcast Style):

Task 2: NOCTI-Style Sample Question

Which of the following is the BEST example of broadcast writing?

- A. The committee, which met for the second time this month, discussed whether to approve a proposal that would raise property taxes by three percent next year.
- B. On Tuesday, the city council approved a plan to raise taxes by three percent starting next year.
- C. CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS VOTED TUESDAY TO RAISE PROPERTY TAXES BY THREE PERCENT NEXT YEAR.
- D. A proposal to raise taxes was brought forward by city council members at a meeting held on Tuesday.

 **Correct Answer:** C — short, clear, active voice, and easy to read aloud.

Final Reminder:

If you can read your script out loud and it sounds natural, you're doing it right. If it sounds like a report or an essay, it needs to be rewritten. Broadcast writing is about communicating clearly, quickly, and conversationally. Master this, and you'll be stronger in every part of your NOCTI exam — and in real-world media, too.

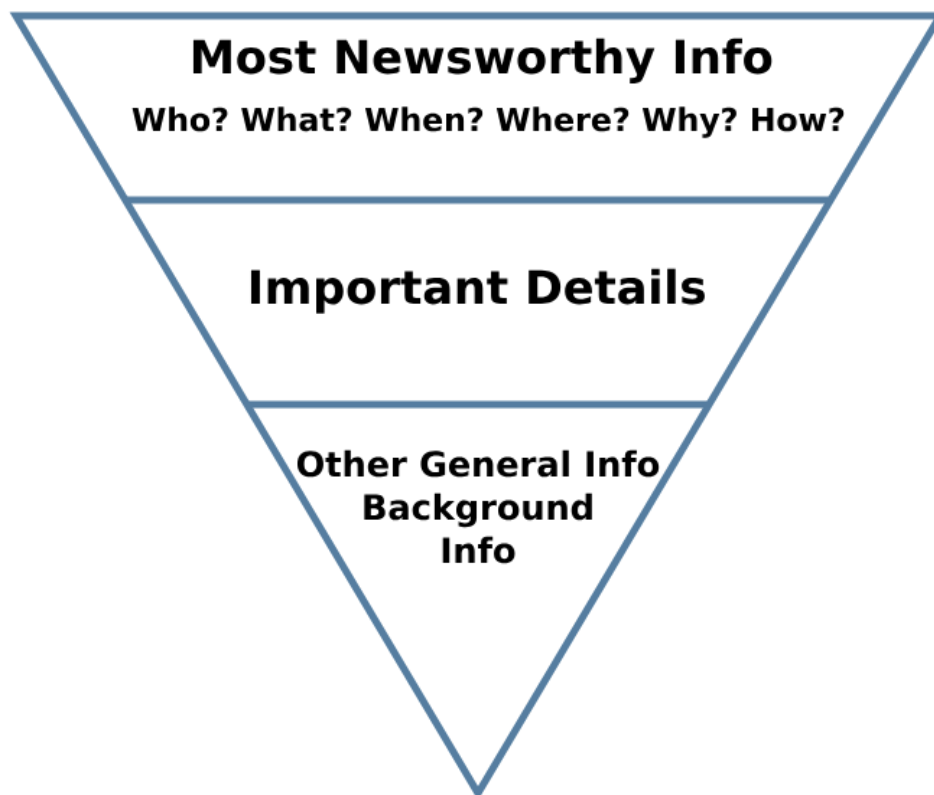
Section 5: Mastering the Inverted Pyramid Structure

The Inverted Pyramid is a classic journalism structure where the most important information comes first, followed by supporting details, and finally, background or extra information. This format is used in both print and broadcast — but in broadcast, it's especially critical because time is limited and the audience needs to understand the story immediately.

▲ What Is the Inverted Pyramid?

Think of it like an upside-down triangle:

1. **Top (Most Important Info)**
 - Who, What, When, Where, Why, How
2. **Middle (Supporting Details)**
 - Quotes, stats, additional facts
3. **Bottom (Background Info)**
 - Context, history, related material



Broadcast Example (Inverted Pyramid Style)

TOP: BELLVILLE CITY COUNCIL VOTED LAST NIGHT TO APPROVE A NEW NOISE ORDINANCE.

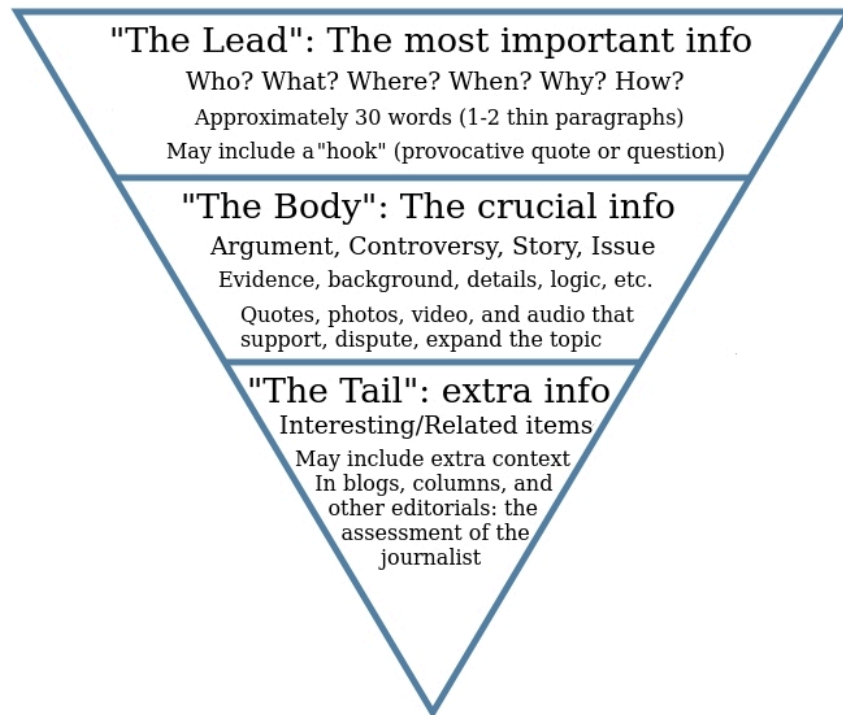
MIDDLE: THE VOTE PASSED 4 TO 1 AFTER A LENGTHY PUBLIC HEARING.

BOTTOM: THE CITY HAS BEEN REVIEWING THE ORDINANCE SINCE COMPLAINTS WERE FILED LAST SUMMER.

For Print Journalism (The Bellville Herd)

When writing articles for The Herd, the inverted pyramid still applies — but with more room to expand ideas. Print allows for longer leads, deeper context, and more background.

Use the format below when you're writing for **print stories, editorials, or features**:



Attribution:

"Inverted pyramid in comprehensive form" by Christopher Schwartz is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

Quick Summary:

- The Lead: Most important facts — Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
- The Body: Quotes, supporting evidence, controversy or deeper details
- The Tail: Related facts, extra context, or a journalist's perspective

Understanding both formats lets you switch easily between writing for broadcast (NOCTI focus) and writing for print (The Herd).

Why It Matters

- Helps editors cut from the bottom up without losing the main point
- Makes stories clear and fast for listeners/viewers

- Gives producers flexibility if timing changes

In broadcast, **every second counts**. Viewers may only hear the first 10–15 seconds of a story. If you follow the inverted pyramid, they still walk away informed.

Practice Activity: Organize the StoryInstructions:

Below are scrambled facts. Put them in the correct order using the Inverted Pyramid.

Scrambled Story Info:

- Police say the fire started in the kitchen.
- The fire department arrived within five minutes.
- A family of four escaped unharmed.
- A fire broke out at a home on Chestnut Street this morning.
- Investigators believe a faulty appliance may be to blame.

Quick Tips to Remember

- Put the **“big stuff” first** — don’t build up to it.
- If you ran out of time and had to cut your story in half, would it still make sense? If yes, you’re doing it right.
- Ask yourself: Can someone get the point if they only hear my first two sentences?

Master the inverted pyramid, and you’ll master the foundation of strong, clear storytelling. It’s the backbone of every script that gets to the point — fast.

Section 6: Scriptwriting – Crafting Clear and Engaging News Copy

Broadcast scripts are the blueprint for what the audience sees and hears. Writing them well is both a technical skill and a storytelling art. Unlike print writing, your copy must be spoken smoothly, match the visuals, and hold the audience’s attention — all in just a few seconds.

What Makes a Good Broadcast Script?

- **Clear** – Easy to understand the first time it’s heard
- **Conversational** – Feels like natural speech
- **Timed** – Fits the segment’s length and pacing
- **Visual** – Written with supporting footage in mind

- **Structured** – Includes intro, body, and closing tag (or toss)

Common Script Elements

- **Anchor Intro (Lead-In):** Brief setup by the anchor
- **VO (Voiceover):** Narration over B-roll footage
- **SOT (Sound on Tape):** Interview or natural sound clip
- **Bridge or Standup:** Reporter appears on camera for a transition or key detail
- **Tag:** Closing line that wraps the story

Writing Tips for Great Copy

- Write in **ALL CAPS** for teleprompter readability
- Use **double-spacing** to help with pacing
- Spell out numbers under 12 (“three,” not “3”) unless visually shown
- Avoid tongue-twisters or long words
- Mark pauses with ellipses (...) or slashes (/)
- Read it out loud — if it trips you up, fix it

Example Script (30-Second VO/SOT Format)

ANCHOR ON CAM:

BELLVILLE STUDENTS ARE GEARING UP FOR A NEW SEASON OF MARCHING BAND — AND THEY’RE ALREADY HITTING THE FIELD.

VO:

STUDENTS SPENT THE WEEKEND PRACTICING FORMATIONS AND MUSIC FOR THEIR FALL PERFORMANCES. THE PROGRAM CONTINUES TO GROW, WITH OVER 100 STUDENTS PARTICIPATING THIS YEAR.

SOT:

“I THINK IT’S GOING TO BE OUR BEST YEAR YET,” SAYS DRUM MAJOR CLAIRE SMITH. “WE’VE GOT A GREAT TEAM, AND WE’RE ALL REALLY EXCITED.”

TAG:

THE FIRST PERFORMANCE IS SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 8TH AT THE HOME OPENER AGAINST TOMBALL.

 **Practice Activity: Write Your Own**

Assignment: Use the following facts to write a 30-second script using the VO/SOT format.

Facts to Include:

- Bellville FFA students attended a livestock show this weekend
- Several students placed in the top three of their divisions
- One student won Grand Champion for swine
- The event was held in Brenham

Now Write Your Script:

Final Thought

Scriptwriting isn't just about putting words on a page — it's about creating a rhythm the anchor or reporter can speak naturally. When done right, it sounds effortless — and delivers information that's clear, compelling, and tight on time.

Section 7: Producing News Segments – From Concept to Air

Behind every polished broadcast is a carefully planned segment. Producing a news segment means managing everything from story ideas and scripts to footage, timing, and delivery. This role is part storyteller, part project manager — and 100% essential.

What Does Producing Involve?

A producer's job is to take a story from idea to finished product. That means:

- Choosing or assigning stories
- Writing or reviewing scripts
- Coordinating VO, SOT, and B-roll
- Planning the segment's length and placement in the show
- Communicating with anchors, reporters, editors, and directors

The News Segment Workflow

Here's the typical process for producing a short news segment:

1. Story Pitch or Assignment

- Where the story idea comes from
2. **Research and Planning**
 - Find facts, sources, and visuals
 3. **Scripting and Storyboarding**
 - Draft the script and map out footage
 4. **Shooting and Gathering Content**
 - Capture interviews and B-roll
 5. **Editing and Timing**
 - Combine VO, SOT, and visuals into a smooth piece
 6. **Final Review and Airing**
 - Approve the final cut and schedule it in the rundown

Real-World Example

Segment: City Council Approves Skate Park

Producer Tasks:

- Confirm council vote happened
- Assign reporter to cover reaction from local teens
- Write intro and tag
- Plan a 1-minute VO/SOT format
- Coordinate with editor for b-roll of the location
- Add segment to Wednesday's rundown after the weather

Practice Activity

Scenario:

You're producing a segment on a new robotics class at Bellville High School.

Instructions: Write a rough segment plan that includes:

- A lead-in (anchor intro)
- What video footage you'd need
- One sound bite you'd want to include
- A short closing tag

Your Segment Plan:

[Write here.]

✓ Final Reminder

Great producers don't just manage time — they shape the story. The more clearly you plan the structure, the easier it is for everyone else to do their job. Producers are the quiet power behind strong broadcasts.

Section 8: Understanding Rundowns and Newscast Flow

A rundown is the backbone of every newscast. It's a carefully timed plan that tells everyone — from anchors to directors — what's happening and when. Without it, the show would fall apart.

What Is a Rundown?

A **rundown** is a show's master schedule. It includes:

- The order of every segment
- How long each segment should last
- Who's reading or reporting each part
- When videos, graphics, or sound will play

It's built by the **producer** and followed by the **anchor, director, technical crew, and editor**.

Why Rundowns Matter

- Keeps the show on time
- Helps avoid mistakes (like overlapping mics or missed cues)
- Allows everyone to work together smoothly
- Gives flexibility to cut or add stories on the fly

Sample Rundown (Abbreviated)

<u>Slug</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Talent</u>	<u>Time</u>
OPENING HEADLINES	VO	Anchor 1	0:30
SCHOOL LUNCH HIKE	PKG	Reporter	1:30
WEATHER TEASE	VO	Anchor 2	0:20

FULL WEATHER	LIVE	Weather	1:45
BAND PREVIEW	VO/SOT	Anchor 1	1:00
CLOSING TAG	VO	Anchor 1	0:15

Voice of Experience

“The rundown is your roadmap. When breaking news hits or something runs long, it’s what tells you what to drop or rearrange.” ~ Chris Schneider, Broadcast Professional

Practice Activity

Instructions: Create a 5-line mini-rundown for a school news show. Include:

- A headline story
- A sports update
- A weather segment
- One VO/SOT segment
- A closing tag

Your Mini Rundown:

[Write here.]

Final Reminder

The best news teams don’t wing it — they follow a plan. A tight rundown makes even a chaotic show feel effortless. And if something goes wrong (and it will), the rundown is what brings you back on track.

Section 9: The Anatomy of a News Package

A **news package** is a complete, pre-recorded story that includes narration, interviews, visuals, and often the reporter on camera. It’s the most common format for in-depth reporting in both professional newsrooms and student productions.

Think of a package as a **self-contained story** — it tells the full narrative from beginning to end and can air without interruption.

What Makes Up a News Package?

A typical package includes these elements in this order:

1. **Anchor Lead-In**
 - Short intro read by the anchor before the package starts
2. **Reporter Voiceover (VO)**
 - Narration that explains what's happening while B-roll plays
3. **SOT (Sound on Tape)**
 - Interview clips that add real voices to the story
4. **Standup or Bridge (optional)**
 - Reporter appears on camera briefly, often in the middle or at the end
5. **Closing VO or Tag**
 - Final line from the reporter to wrap things up

Real-World Breakdown

ANCHOR LEAD-IN:

BELLVILLE HIGH STUDENTS ARE CELEBRATING A MAJOR WIN THIS WEEKEND — AND IT'S ABOUT MORE THAN JUST SPORTS.

PKG STARTS – Reporter Voiceover:

STUDENTS FROM THE ROBOTICS TEAM TOOK FIRST PLACE AT THE STATE COMPETITION...

SOT (Student Interview):

“WE’VE BEEN WORKING ON THIS FOR MONTHS. IT’S A BIG DEAL FOR OUR PROGRAM.”

Standup (Reporter On Camera):

“THIS MARKS THE TEAM’S THIRD CONSECUTIVE WIN AT THE STATE LEVEL...”

Reporter Tag:

“IN BELLVILLE, I’M JAMES FIELDS, REPORTING.”

Why Packages Are Important

- Allow for **better storytelling** than a quick VO/SOT
- Give time for **more visuals, emotion, and detail**
- Teach students how to **plan, shoot, script, and edit** a complete story

In NOCTI testing and real-world jobs, you’ll be expected to know how to structure a package — and even how to build one yourself.

Practice Activity

Assignment: Plan a 60–90 second package on this topic:

“Bellville’s New Dog Park Opens to the Public”

Write a rough outline including:

- A lead-in (anchor intro)
- 2 VO sections (narrated points)
- 1 SOT (interview quote)
- Optional standup
- Closing tag

Your Package Outline:

[Write here.]

Final Reminder

If you can build a good package, you can tell a strong story. Packages are where your creativity, scripting, and editing all come together — and they’re your best shot at making a lasting impression on your audience.

Section 10: Using B-Roll, VO, and SOT Effectively

Great broadcast stories are more than just words — they’re a mix of sight, sound, and structure. Three tools bring that all together: B-roll, VO (voiceover), and SOT (sound on tape).

Learning how to combine them smoothly is essential to producing stories that are clear, dynamic, and engaging.

What They Are — and How to Use Them

B-ROLL

Video footage that plays under narration or audio.

- Shows what's happening rather than just telling it
- Adds depth, realism, and energy
- Helps cover cuts or awkward transitions

Pro Tip: Always gather more B-roll than you think you'll need.

VO (Voiceover)

Narration from the reporter or anchor played over B-roll.

- Explains what the audience is seeing
- Keeps the story moving
- Should match visuals — don't say "students arrive" while showing an empty classroom

Example:

VO: "STUDENTS SPENT THE AFTERNOON SETTING UP FOR THE SPRING FESTIVAL..."

SOT (Sound on Tape)

A short interview or quote played directly in the story.

- Brings emotion and authenticity
- Used to support or react to the VO
- Keep it short — 10 to 15 seconds is ideal

Example:

SOT: "IT'S REALLY FUN TO SEE THE WHOLE SCHOOL COME TOGETHER FOR THIS," SAID STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBER AVERY LANE.

Putting It All Together

A strong VO/SOT structure looks like this:

VO — B-roll of setup
 SOT — Teacher explaining the event
 VO — B-roll of students arriving
 SOT — Student reacting
 VO — Wrap-up narration
 (Optional) Tag or standup

Why It Matters

- These three tools make your stories watchable, not just “hearable”
- Viewers stay engaged when they see and hear variety

The NOCTI test may show you clips or images and ask which parts are VO, SOT, or B-roll

Practice Activity

Scenario:

You’re producing a VO/SOT segment on a community clean-up day.

Instructions: Write a short sequence that includes:

- A VO introduction
- A SOT with a volunteer
- A closing VO line

Your VO/SOT Script:

[Write here.]

Final Reminder

If your visuals, voiceovers, and sound bites are well balanced, your story will feel natural and professional. Mastering this skill makes every broadcast stronger — and it’s key to standing out on both the NOCTI and in the field.

Section 11: Conducting and Editing Interviews for Broadcast

In broadcast journalism, interviews aren’t just about gathering facts — they’re about capturing moments, emotion, and perspective. A good interview clip (SOT) can bring your story to life. A bad one can slow it down or confuse the viewer.

To produce a strong package or VO/SOT, you need to know how to **ask great questions**, **record clean audio**, and **edit quotes down** to their most powerful moments.

What Makes a Good Interview Clip?

- Clear and easy to understand
- Short (10–15 seconds max)
- On-topic and emotional
- Recorded in a quiet, well-lit space
- Framed correctly with good eye contact and background

How to Ask Good Questions

- Ask **open-ended questions** (“How did that feel?” instead of “Did you like it?”)
- Don’t interrupt — let them finish their thoughts
- Start with easy questions, then build up
- Watch their body language — some people loosen up over time

Tips for Recording Interviews

- Use a **lav mic or handheld mic** for clean audio
- Record a little bit **before and after** the answer (to make editing easier)
- **Check your levels** before the interview begins
- Make sure the subject isn’t **backlit** (avoid windows behind them)

How to Edit Interview Clips

- **Cut out filler words:** “um,” “like,” “you know”
- **Trim the question** — you usually only keep the answer
- **Keep it natural** — don’t slice mid-word or mid-thought
- Only use what supports your script or tells the story best

Real-World Example

Original answer (raw):

“Um, yeah, so I guess we started planning the festival like, maybe two months ago or something? And it’s been a lot of work, but I think it’ll pay off.”

Edited SOT for air:

“WE STARTED PLANNING TWO MONTHS AGO. IT’S BEEN A LOT OF WORK, BUT I THINK IT’LL PAY OFF.”

Practice Activity

Scenario: You're interviewing a teacher about a new after-school tutoring program.

Instructions:

- Write 2 strong, open-ended interview questions
- Write a sample SOT you'd want to pull from that interview
- Edit the quote down to 1–2 clean sentences for air

Your Questions & SOT Edit:

[Write here.]

Final Reminder

A powerful interview adds authenticity and heart to your story. Learn to guide people, listen carefully, and find the quotes that say the most with the fewest words — that's the difference between a reporter and a storyteller.

Section 12: News Anchoring – Voice, Presence, and Timing

Anchors are the face and voice of the newscast. They guide the audience through each story, set the tone, and keep the broadcast on track. Being a strong anchor requires more than just reading the script — it's about delivering information with clarity, confidence, and control.

What Anchors Actually Do

- **Present the news clearly** and professionally
- **Toss to reporters, weather, or packages**
- Maintain **eye contact with the camera**
- React calmly to technical issues or breaking news
- Keep the tone appropriate — serious, neutral, or warm, depending on the story

Voice Matters

Your voice is your most powerful tool. To sound professional on air:

- Speak with a **strong, steady tone** — not rushed or robotic

- Use **inflection** to keep things interesting (don't sound monotone)
- Emphasize important words or numbers
- **Pause** for impact and pacing
- Breathe from your diaphragm — not your throat

Pro Tip: Practice reading scripts aloud daily. Record yourself and listen for pitch, clarity, and pacing.

Presence on Camera

- **Posture:** Sit or stand tall with relaxed shoulders
- **Eye contact:** Look into the lens like you're talking to a person
- **Facial expression:** Match the tone of the story — don't smile during sad news or look bored during positive pieces
- **Hands:** Keep gestures minimal and controlled

Timing is Everything

- Hit your marks — finish stories within your assigned time
- Use the **teleprompter**, but don't depend on it — know your material
- Be ready to **adapt live** — producers may give cues through IFB or floor directors

Practice Anchor Segment

Instructions: Write a short 20-second anchor intro for the following story:

Bellville High School students are preparing for a district-wide academic competition next weekend. Over 40 students from five categories are expected to participate.

Your Anchor Intro:

[Write here.]

Final Reminder

Anchoring isn't just about reading — it's about leading the viewer through the broadcast. With the right voice, presence, and timing, you can earn the audience's trust and deliver the news in a way that's professional, polished, and impactful.

Section 13: Live Reporting – Tools, Techniques, and Tactics

Live reporting is one of the most challenging — and exciting — parts of broadcast journalism. Unlike pre-recorded packages, live reports happen in real time, often in unpredictable situations. To succeed, you need to stay calm, be prepared, and think on your feet.

What Makes a Report “Live”?

A **live report** is delivered on-air as it’s happening. It may be:

- At the scene of breaking news
- During a weather event or community activity
- A live interview or remote segment

You’ll often hear anchors say:

“We go now live to our reporter on the scene...”

Live Reporting Skills You Must Master

- **Speak clearly** without relying on a script
- **Stick to key facts** — no rambling
- Be ready to **improvise** if things change or go wrong
- Listen through your **IFB** for cues from the producer
- Describe what’s happening **as the viewer sees it**

Tools of a Live Reporter

<u>Tool</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
IFB	Earpiece for cues from the control room
Mic + Windscreen	Clear audio in outdoor settings
Live Backpack or Encoder	Sends signal back to the studio
Phone/Tablet	For notes, updates, or script prompts
Floor Director (if in studio)	Cues and timing signals

Tips for On-Camera Delivery

- Introduce yourself and location:
 - *“I’m Sarah Ortega reporting live from Fireman’s Park...”*
- Stay calm, even if things are noisy or chaotic
- Keep your eyes on the camera or anchor (not the crowd)
- If you forget something — recover confidently. Don’t panic.

Real-World Challenge

Scenario: You're reporting live at a town hall meeting that just got unexpectedly heated.

Instructions:

- Write a 2–3 sentence live “on the scene” standup
- Stay factual, calm, and describe what viewers might be seeing

Your Live Standup:

[Write here.]

Final Reminder

Live reporting tests every skill you've learned: voice, timing, clarity, and control. If you can master live delivery, you'll be ready for anything — including those moments when the script goes out the window.

Section 14: Field Production vs. Studio Production

Broadcast news happens in two main environments: **in the studio** and **out in the field**. Each setting has its own tools, challenges, and workflows. Understanding how they differ — and how to work in both — makes you a more flexible and capable broadcaster.

Studio Production

Studio production happens in a controlled, indoor setting where everything is planned and rehearsed.

Key Features:

- Anchors read from a teleprompter
- Multiple cameras on fixed mounts
- Lighting and audio fully controlled
- Crew roles clearly assigned (director, TD, prompter operator, etc.)
- Scripts are preloaded and timed precisely

Studio Advantages:

- Controlled environment = fewer surprises
- Easier for precise timing and visuals
- Ideal for live broadcasts and polished segments

Field Production

Field production takes place outside the studio — at schools, events, meetings, or breaking news scenes.

Key Features:

- Portable gear (cameras, lights, mics, tripods)
- Unpredictable lighting, weather, or sound
- Smaller crews (often just a reporter and camera operator)
- Interviews, B-roll, and standups shot on location

Field Advantages:

- Brings viewers “to the scene” visually and emotionally
- Allows for breaking news and real-time updates
- Captures authentic sights and sounds

Comparison Chart

Feature	Studio	Field
Environment	Controlled, indoor	Unpredictable, on location
Equipment	Fixed, professional gear	Portable, flexible gear
Lighting/Sound	Fully managed	Must adapt to conditions
Crew	Full production team	Small, multitasking crew
Uses	Anchoring, weather, interviews	Live reports, B-roll, standups

Practice Activity

Scenario: You’re covering the same story — a school fundraiser — once in the studio, and once in the field.

Instructions:

List 2 advantages and 2 challenges for each setting.

Studio Coverage:

- Advantages:
- Challenges:

Field Coverage:

- Advantages:
- Challenges:

Final Reminder

In the studio, you control everything. In the field, you adapt to everything. Both settings are essential to modern broadcasting — and your ability to work in either will make you a more valuable part of the production team.

Section 15: Using Teleprompters and IFBs with Confidence

When you're on camera, your tools are just as important as your script. Two of the most essential tools for live broadcasting are the **teleprompter** and the **IFB (Interruptible Foldback)**. These help you stay on script, stay on time, and stay in sync with the control room — all without missing a beat.

What's a Teleprompter?

A **teleprompter** is a screen that scrolls the script while you're on camera. It lets you read without looking down at paper — so you can maintain eye contact with the audience.

Best Practices:

- Read naturally — don't sound like you're reading
- Stay centered on the lens, not the screen edges
- Use pauses and emphasis just like in real conversation
- Practice timing with the prompter operator

What's an IFB?

An **IFB** is the earpiece anchors and reporters wear to receive real-time instructions from the control room. Producers use it to give cues like:

“Wrap it up.”
“We’re skipping the next segment.”
“Toss to weather now.”

✓ Best Practices:

- Keep your focus on the audience, not the voice in your ear
- Learn to listen and talk at the same time
- Repeat the last line if the IFB interrupts your delivery
- Don’t panic if it cuts out — stay calm and continue

🧠 Why They Matter

- The **teleprompter** helps with pacing, eye contact, and delivery
- The **IFB** keeps the broadcast team in sync — especially during live or changing situations
- On the NOCTI exam, you may be asked how these tools work or how to respond to sudden changes

🎯 Real-World Scenario

Scenario: You’re mid-way through your script when your producer comes into your IFB and says,

“*Cut the tag — toss to weather NOW.*”

Your job:

- Keep speaking smoothly
- Drop the last line
- Toss to weather without showing stress or confusion

✍️ Practice Activity

Instructions:

Write a short 15-second anchor segment that ends with a toss to the weather team. Then, rewrite it with an alternate version where your tag gets dropped unexpectedly.

Your Script with Tag:

[Write here.]

Your Script with Toss Instead:

[Write here.]

✓ Final Reminder

Great broadcasters don't just sound good — they handle pressure with poise. Mastering the teleprompter and IFB lets you stay calm, connected, and in control, even when things change mid-sentence.

Section 16: Newsroom Collaboration – Working with Producers and Editors

In a newsroom, no one works alone. Every story you see on air is the result of teamwork between **reporters, anchors, producers, editors, directors, and camera crews**. Knowing how to collaborate in this fast-paced environment is just as important as knowing how to write a script or hold a mic.

🧩 Who Does What?

<u>Role</u>	<u>Main Responsibility</u>
Reporter	Gathers facts, conducts interviews, writes packages
Anchor	Presents stories, tosses to segments, leads the show
Producer	Organizes the show, assigns stories, manages timing
Editor	Cuts video, syncs audio, and builds visual storytelling
Photographer	Shoots footage, b-roll, and live shots on location
Director	Executes the rundown in real time during the broadcast

🧠 How Teams Communicate

- **Producers** give story assignments and approve scripts
- **Editors** rely on clear shot lists and organized footage from reporters
- **Reporters** must turn in clean VO and SOT notes with timestamps
- **Anchors** read from scripts built by the producer (and sometimes edited by reporters)
- Everyone must be ready for **last-minute changes** and stay on the same page

🔄 What Good Collaboration Looks Like

- Meeting deadlines and being ready when others depend on your part
- Listening to feedback and revising scripts or edits as needed
- Communicating clearly — use Slack, notes, or verbal check-ins
- Staying organized — label footage, scripts, and rundowns cleanly

Real-World Example

The producer adds a breaking story into the rundown with only 10 minutes before air. The reporter quickly updates the script, the editor pulls b-roll, and the anchor reviews the copy before going live.

Result: The audience never knows it wasn't part of the original show plan.

Practice Activity

Scenario: Your producer has just asked for a 45-second package on a last-minute school board decision. You have 1 hour to collaborate with your editor and prepare the segment for the evening show.

Instructions:

Write a short checklist of how you would:

1. Coordinate with the editor
2. Keep your producer informed
3. Prepare a script and shot list under time pressure

Your Collaboration Checklist:

[Write here.]

Final Reminder

Broadcasting is a team effort. You can't do it all — but you're expected to do **your part** well and on time. When you work clearly, communicate quickly, and stay flexible, your newsroom runs like a machine — and the audience gets the best show possible.

Section 17: Adapting to Emerging Tools and Multimedia Platforms

Broadcast journalism is no longer just TV and radio. Today's professionals use apps, social media, streaming platforms, mobile editing tools, and cloud-based collaboration. To stay relevant — and employed — you must be flexible and comfortable adapting to whatever platform the audience is using.

What “Multimedia” Means in Modern Broadcasting

Multimedia journalism means combining:

- **Video** (packages, VO/SOTs, livestreams)
- **Audio** (podcasts, radio spots, voiceovers)
- **Graphics** (lower thirds, headlines, data visualizations)
- **Text** (website articles, captions, social blurbs)
- **Social Media Content** (Instagram reels, TikToks, X posts, YouTube Shorts)

All these formats may come from a single story — just tailored for different audiences.

Tools You Should Know About

<u>Tool/Platform</u>	<u>Use In Journalism</u>
Adobe Premiere Rush	Fast video editing on mobile or desktop
Canva	Quick social media graphics & thumbnails
Anchor.fm / Spotify	Podcast creation and distribution
TikTok/Instagram Reels	Short-form news updates or promos
Google Drive	Sharing rundowns, footage, scripts with a team
StreamYard/OBS/Vmix	Live Streaming events, interviews, and news

Why This Matters

- The NOCTI test may include **questions on media platforms and formats**
- Employers want grads who can post, edit, and publish content **across multiple platforms**
- Small newsrooms rely on **tech-savvy staff** who can adapt fast
- Knowing the tools makes you **more creative and self-sufficient**

Real-World Scenario

Scenario: You cover a local fundraiser for broadcast, but also need to:

- Post a photo + caption to Instagram
- Create a short vertical video for TikTok
- Write a short blurb for the station website

Same story — 3 different platforms. **That’s what multimedia journalism looks like.**

Practice Activity

Instructions: Pick a recent Bellville-related story idea (real or imagined). Write a quick plan for how you would adapt the story across:

1. Your broadcast segment (VO/SOT or package)
2. Instagram or Facebook
3. A podcast or short-form audio piece

Your Plan:

[Write here.]

Final Reminder

Technology changes fast — but strong storytellers adapt faster. If you can write well, shoot clean footage, and format it for any platform, you'll always be one step ahead of the industry.

Section 19: Maintaining Accuracy and Ethical Standards in Production

In journalism, credibility is everything. Once you lose the trust of your audience, it's nearly impossible to earn it back. That's why accuracy, fairness, and ethical behavior are not just good habits — they're core professional standards.

Whether you're writing a script, editing an interview, or posting on social media, **your job is to tell the truth clearly and responsibly.**

What Accuracy Means in Journalism

- **Check every fact:** names, numbers, dates, titles
- **Verify sources:** never rely on rumors or unconfirmed info
- **Quote people correctly:** don't twist words or take them out of context
- **Use updated visuals:** never use old footage to represent a new event unless clearly labeled

Even a small error can damage your story — or your career.

Key Ethical Guidelines

Principle	What It Means
Fairness	Represent all sides of a story without bias or distortion
Transparency	Be open about how and where you got your information
Privacy	Avoid invading someone's privacy without a compelling reason
Respect	Treat interviewees and subjects with dignity and professionalism
Independence	Avoid conflicts of interest or letting personal views shape the story

What NOT to Do

- Don't stage or fake footage — ever
- Don't insert your opinion into a news script
- Don't crop quotes to change their meaning
- Don't rush a story out without double-checking facts
- Don't alter video or audio in a way that misleads the audience

Real-World Example

A reporter edits an interview to make it sound like someone supported a decision — when in fact, they were against it. The clip goes viral, and the station issues a public apology. The station's reputation suffers — and the reporter is fired.

Moral: Speed never outweighs the truth.

Practice Activity

Scenario: You're producing a story on a controversial school board decision. One interviewee gives a strong opinion that could be misunderstood if taken out of context.

Instructions:

Write a short plan for how you would:

1. Handle the quote ethically
2. Add balance to the story

3. Check your final segment for accuracy

Your Ethical Plan:

[Write here.]

 **Final Reminder**

Good journalism is built on truth, not tricks. Always ask yourself:
“Is this accurate? Is this fair? Would I stand by this if challenged?”
If the answer is yes, you’re doing your job.