

WRITING TV NEWS TIP SHEET

Slugs, or story labels

- Must be unique to each story
- Must be short (2-5 words max)
- Should reflect the importance of the story and why it matters: location, person and/or event.

TV News Headlines

- Promote and 'hook' audience interest in the story
- Used to preview stories at the top of a bulletin or midway as a tease of what's coming up next.
- Must always be interesting and never boring!
- To be interesting, it must be relatable.

News scripts

- Present tense
- Write for the spoken word/be conversational
- Don't use difficult words or words that are hard to pronounce
- Short, clear succinct sentences
- Write to pictures or vision. Make sure your words match the vision.
- Make the story relatable and engaging



KEY POINTS:

- Engage or hook your audience at the beginning
- Most TV news scripts for TV news packages are 1:40-3 minutes
- Most RVOs are three or four sentences
- Consider - Why does this story matter? What do people need to know? What's memorable about this story? What will people remember the next day?
- Make sure the location is clear.
- Make sure you only use terms that are understood by the audience.
- Minimise use of acronyms, eg BAWASLU
- Don't use jargon
- Minimise your use of adjectives

Story structure:

- Best pictures/vision at the beginning
- Invest time and inspiration in your lead sentence
- Let the pictures and your talent tell the story as much as possible
- Keep scripting tight
- Layer up your story with elements that help the audience understand key information: graphics, maps, quotes.
- Ensure your story is timely, with the latest information



Bulletin structure:

- What is the role of your story in the bulletin/program?
- Is it a headline story? Is it the lead story?
- Is it one of many RVOs in the bulletin? Do you have enough engaging and relevant vision to support a three or four sentence RVO? Could you present the information as an explainer instead?
- Is it a light, amusing or human-interest story – and how will your writing reflect that. Should your tone be more conversational, even humorous?
- Will your story be the story that people remember tomorrow?

Remember:

- Be clear, concise and precise. Choose your words wisely.
- Write to pictures. Engage your audience. Be conversational and talk like a human.
- Facts are vital, but tell stories about people not statistics.
- Be careful not to fill a broadcast story with numbers.
- Find a connection and make your story relevant to your audience.
- If in doubt, delete.
- Seek and welcome feedback all the time!

