

# Glossary of Media Terms

**“-30-” (also “###” or “END”):** This notation is used to indicate the end of a press release. It has been used to signify “the end” or “over and out” since the Civil War, when telegraphers tapped “XXX” to end transmissions. “XXX” is the Roman numeral for 30. How and when “XXX” became “-30-” in modern printing usage is unclear.

**Actuality:** The comments from a news source on audiotape in a radio news story. The general term “sound bite” is used in radio and TV, but actuality is a term specific to radio.

**Anchor:** The member of a news team who coordinates and delivers the reports.

**Angle:** The approach a reporter takes when writing or reporting a story.

**AP Style:** Writing in accordance with the guidelines provided in The Associated Press (AP) Stylebook, which is the “gold standard” of news writing. Includes more than 3,000 A-to-Z rules on grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, abbreviation, and word and numeral usage.

**Assignment Desk/News Desk:** The hub of the newsroom, from which the Assignment Editor hunts for breaking stories and dispatches reporters and photographers to stories as they happen. This is where you call to alert the paper of your breaking story or event, or to follow up on your news advisory.

**Assignment Editor:** The staff member of a television or radio news team who is responsible for judging the appropriateness of story ideas assigned to reporters for coverage. This is the person you are ultimately convincing of the newsworthiness of your story.

**Audiovisuals (AV):** Graphic presentations that use sight and sound to enhance the understanding of a topic.

**Backgrounder:** This kind of piece provides a history of an organization or issue, including essential facts.

**Biography:** Provides the history of a person, including essential facts.

**Blog:** Short for “Web log,” a specialized Web site that allows an individual or group of individuals to share a running log of events and personal insights with an online audience.

**Blogger:** A person who keeps and/or writes a blog.

**Boilerplate:** A brief paragraph stating who you are, what you do, and how you do it, usually used as the last paragraph in a news release.

**Booker:** The staff person at a TV, radio or cable station who responds to pitch letters when an appearance needs to be arranged or “booked.” (The producer sometimes also serves as the “booker.”)

**B-Roll:** Supplemental video footage, often without narration, sound track or audio, used by broadcasters to supplement the main elements of a news story, or to “cover” on-camera interview edits. Often used as a “teaser” for the main story.

**Byline:** The name printed below the title or at the bottom of a newspaper or magazine article crediting the reporter or author of the piece.

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**Callback:** Telephone follow-up to a printed invitation or advisory sent to the media urging them to cover a story or attend a news conference.

**Cameraman:** Person who operates a video camera for a news station to record your event or interview. Often accompanied by a reporter who asks the questions. However, cameramen are often sent alone, and either ask questions themselves or just get video footage without an interview.

**Circulation:** The number of newspapers, magazines or other print publications that are distributed.

**Clip or Clipping:** A story cut from a publication or a segment cut from a video or audiotape.

**Concept Story:** A feature story designed to pique the interest of a certain demographic audience.

**Consumer Publication:** A printed piece intended for the general reader.

**Contributing Reporter or Writer:** A term often used to describe a freelance writer.

**Copy:** Written text.

**Copy Editor:** The last professional to see and approve written material before it is delivered to an audience by a media outlet. The copy editor is responsible for its accuracy, grammar and length.

**Dateline:** The place and date of an article's origin, which usually appears at the beginning of the first paragraph. For example: SACRAMENTO, February 20, 2009.

**Daybook:** The daily schedules of upcoming news events, published by The Associated Press.

**Delayed Lead:** A writing style in which the specific subject of a story doesn't come into clear focus until some time after the first paragraphs. The usual intent of such writing is to set the background and tone before getting to the main point (compared to the "inverted pyramid" news release format).

**Designated Market Area (DMA):** The area reached by television stations.

**Dub:** A copy of a TV or radio appearance on video or audiotape; also the act of making the copy.

**Editing:** The act of rewriting, viewing, listening and cutting print publications, video or audio to tighten and perfect the story.

**Editor:** The person who edits stories for reporters before they are published. Also the person who writes the editorials on the paper's opinion page (see "Editorial").

**Editorial:** A piece that expresses an opinion (as opposed to a news article, which presents facts without opinion) and appears on the editorial page, separate from news stories.

**Editorial Calendar:** The listing of specific times a publication will produce special stories or sections focusing on specific issues or reports.

**Embargo:** Any restriction placed on when specific information contained in a news release may be used or released by the media, often stating the desired date and time of release.

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**Exclusive:** A news item, interview or feature article that only one newspaper, magazine or television station may carry. Most *major* newspapers require that opinion editorials (see below) are exclusive to their paper.

**Feature:** A special or prominent article in a newspaper or magazine that is not a “hard news” story but of interest to readers.

**Freelancer:** A writer who sells his or her writing services and is not under regular contract to any one publication.

**Ghostwriter:** A person who writes articles or speeches for another person who claims authorship.

**Graf:** A paragraph.

**Hard News:** This kind of piece presents the facts of an event objectively in descending order of importance.

**Head Shot:** A television shot that shows only the upper shoulders, neck, and face of the person being interviewed. Usually accompanied by a computer-generated banner at the bottom of the screen identifying the person and his or her affiliation.

**Inverted Pyramid:** A style of writing news releases in which the most important information is put in the lead, followed by information that is of less and less importance. This construction is used so that an editor can cut the story after any paragraph and still have a complete story that meets space limitations.

**Lead:** The beginning of a news story, which generally contains information on who, what, when, where and why.

**Lead Story:** The most important page-one story in a newspaper which may have a headline extending across the page, or the lead story in a radio or television news broadcast.

**Lead Time:** The period of time that reporters and producers need to prepare stories and information for publication or broadcast.

**Letters to the Editor:** A section of a newspaper where letters from readers are published, where they are free to congratulate, discuss or criticize newspaper content, or to express their personal opinions on current events.

**Marketing:** The process of packaging, advertising, selling and distributing your products or services, as well as the public relations used to support this process.

**Masthead:** The list of editors, publishers and senior reporters printed in a newspaper or magazine, with other information about the publication, including an address and telephone number.

**Media Alert (also “news advisory” or “tip sheet”):** A brief summary of the basic facts of an upcoming news conference or event sent to the media listing the topic, participants and information about when and where; often used when time is too short, or the occasion does not warrant a printed invitation.

**Media Kit:** An organized package of information given to reporters that includes background information on a general topic, candidate, special event or issue.

**Network:** A chain of broadcast or radio stations controlled and operated by a single corporation, often sharing the same editorial material.

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**News Conference:** A formal and organized presentation to members of the news media by people, candidates or group representatives announcing a new service, product or position; reacting to significant happenings or events; or providing the public with new and newsworthy information.

**News Feature:** A special story or article in a print publication or broadcast program that goes into detail about concepts and ideas of specific market interest.

**News Hole:** Space reserved for actual news instead of paid advertising.

**News Release (also “press release”):** The most common written form of communication with the news media, sent from a person, group, or candidate announcing “new” information about their product, service, position or issue.

**Nut Graf:** One or more paragraphs, particularly in a feature story, that explains the news value of the story. The nut graf, which is often the third or fourth paragraph, explains what the story is about, so as to keep the reader interested.

**Off-Lead:** The second most important story on page one of a newspaper.

**Off the Record:** When a quote or information from a source may not be used in a story or for further reporting.

**Official Statement (also “position paper”):** A written statement responding to a particular or controversial issue or topic.

**On Background:** When information given to a reporter may not be used in a story, but will help the reporter understand the story and will help him develop sources and information that can be used.

**On the Record:** When a source can be named and identified by title, rank, job description or other relevant information. Information from the source can be used in direct or indirect quotation.

**Op-Ed (Opinion Editorial):** An article written by an expert expressing opinion on a specific topic or event, that is positioned on the page opposite the editorial page. Not to be confused with Letters to the Editor.

**Package:** A media “package” contains the four key elements a reporter needs to create a good news story — a news event, data or information showing relevance, an interview with a credible source or eyewitness, and an engaging visual. A complete and compelling package increases the chances a story will be covered.

**Photo Alert:** An advisory or invitation that stresses the possibilities for photo coverage.

**Pitch:** Akin to a pitch in sales, a “pitch” is the direct presentation of a story or a story idea to a media outlet. A pitch is not the mere act of sending a news release or advisory — it is a follow-up to such a transmission, and it requires direct communication with a reporter or editor. Pitching a story to newspapers, TV stations, and news services is an *essential* ingredient of a successful media event.

**Producer:** The person in charge of the coordination of all details pertaining to a television or radio program.

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**Public Relations:** A variety of skills and tactics used to create favorable opinion and awareness of a person, product, group event, issue or candidate, or to reverse negative stories or correct public misconceptions. Public relations can also help you develop positive relations with the news media, and to use the media to get information out to the public.

**Publication:** A newspaper, magazine or newsletter with information, news and feature stories, usually produced to be sold or as a service to members of associations or organizations.

**Publicity Tour:** Scheduled publicity appearances in a series of cities or locations.

**Radio Row:** When several radio show hosts broadcast from the same location, usually at a large event or conference. At a radio row, radio shows are able to interview speakers and guests on location.

**Radio Tour:** A series of interviews scheduled back to back with different radio stations during a specified block of time, usually to discuss or promote a particular issue.

**Reporter:** Print reporters gather and analyze facts about current events, then write stories describing their background, meaning and effects. Most print reporters have a regular “beat” or topic they specialize in. TV and radio reporters gather information on a topic of news value and present it in a compelling way — using good visuals, graphics and sound effects. Television reporters tend to be generalists.

**Reach:** The geographic area of the audience and the number of readers, listeners or viewers who are reached by the media in that region.

**Reprint:** A copy of an article that mentions you or your company.

**Roundup Story:** A story geared to look back at what has happened over a specific period of time, such as the previous year or quarter. Also, a story in which a reporter wants several opinions on a subject.

**Satellite Feed:** Video footage that is made available to multiple television stations at a specified time via satellite.

**Screeener:** Person assigned to “screen” callers on live radio or TV call-in shows to ensure they are on topic, present a fresh angle, have a clear question, are interesting, are legitimate and not abusive before being put through to the show’s on-air host or hosts.

**Sidebar:** A legal term that the media has adopted to describe a portion of a story that is relevant but not necessary to the body of the story, such as data, a glossary or a deeper explanation of a concept mentioned in the story. Usually, it is set apart from the body of the article by a box or screen to make it stand out. This term is also used to describe a feature that appears in conjunction with a news article that provides the human interest or historical aspects of a story.

**Slug:** A brief heading — usually one word — that designates an article or assignment.

**Sound Bite:** A very short piece of audio or footage that is taken from a longer speech or an interview, usually when the speaker says something that is considered by those editing the speech or interview to be the most important point.

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**Specialized Publication:** An industry-specific trade or professional publication, e.g. for manufacturing, insurance, telecommunications, etc.

**Spin:** Jargon for the point of view or bias you create in a story.

**Spot News:** Current news that is reported immediately.

**Stand-up Shot:** A television shot in which the source is filmed standing in front of a wall while a reporter asks questions. This kind of shot adds an authoritative source to a television story.

**Stylebook:** An organization's printed guide on matters of grammar and style, proper logo use, etc.

**Sub Story:** Copy substituted for another, earlier piece.

**Syndicated:** When a report appears in more than one media outlet simultaneously.

**Syndicated Columnist:** A person hired by publications or broadcast organizations to produce written or spoken commentary about specific feature subjects. A syndicated print column is usually published in a wide variety of newspapers or magazines.

**Target Audience:** A select group of people who share similar needs or conditions, such as income, age, sex, or education, who best represent the most likely potential receivers of an organization's message.

**Tease:** An enticing lead to a story that tells just enough about the story to urge the reader or listener to continue.

**Trade Publication:** A publication that focuses on a specific profession or industry.

**VO (Voice Over):** Also referred to as "off camera" commentary. Refers to the production technique where a voice is recorded and then played "over" another image on screen — often b-roll footage (see above) — to describe what is being seen.

**VNR (Video News Release):** The broadcast version of a press release. A VNR usually includes a packaged news story that is between 60 and 90 seconds long that is ready for on-the-air use and b-roll. This allows producers to easily edit and create their own stories.

**Wire Copy:** Stories supplied to newspapers by news services.

**Wire Service:** A company that supplies news stories, features, etc., directly to subscribing or member newspapers, radio and television stations.