

# How-To Manual

**FOXCT**  
**STUDENT**  
**NEWS**

# WELCOME TO FOX CT STUDENT NEWS HOW-TO MANUAL

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

FSN Mission Statement and Teacher Guidelines for participation	3
Affidavit of Student Participation	4
Upload Guidelines	5
What is News?	6
Determining the News You Should Cover	7
How a Reporter Gathers News	8
WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY & HOW	9
Planning Your Story	10
Field Producing	11
“Tell me a story...” --Writing into your sound bites	12
Videography	14
Interviews	16
Reporter’s Stand-up	17
Editing	18
Music	19
Sports	20
Critical Tips	21
Top 10 Reasons Why Your Video Didn’t Get Air	21
Highly Recommended Publications	21
Field Production Checklist	22
Deconstructing a News Story	24

## **FOX CT STUDENT NEWS MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of this program is to give students an opportunity to learn video newsgathering skills through real life experience, informing and educating them along the way.

FOX CT began by broadcasting Student News stories. Today we showcase the Student News stories at [www.ctnow.com/about/studentnews/](http://www.ctnow.com/about/studentnews/)

### **Teacher As Coach, Not Player**

FOX CT Student News is an educational program for students. In order for stories to be eligible for posting on the site, they should be written, produced, shot, and edited entirely by students, with teachers acting only as coaches, mentors and advisors.

## AFFIDAVIT OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION

**This form must be completed by the teacher and submitted with each story.**

**No substitutions allowed.**

FOX CT Student News  
285 Broad Street  
Hartford, CT 06115

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear FOX CT Student News Manager:

I'd like you to know that the following students worked on this news story:

Name of Story: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher's Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

These students performed the following jobs (**please print clearly or type in names**):

Photographers: \_\_\_\_\_

Editors: \_\_\_\_\_

Reporter: \_\_\_\_\_

Writers: \_\_\_\_\_

Production Assistants: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Positions: \_\_\_\_\_

I, (Teacher's Signature) \_\_\_\_\_, state that the students listed above created their news story with my guidance but without my direct help.

## Guidelines

Email to [studentnews@ctnow.com](mailto:studentnews@ctnow.com) with links to other content on YouTube and Flickr

- Name it School - Title (Anywhere High School - Can Drive For Veterans)
- Include links relevant to the story
- For passwords to upload, send an email.

## WHAT IS NEWS?

The best way to understand what News is, is to watch as much of it as possible. Watch the local and national news broadcasts. Listen to National Public Radio. (That is some of the very best writing you will ever hear). Watch *60 Minutes*, *Sunday Morning on CBS*, and other news magazine shows. By deconstructing the story, you will learn how to be a more critical watcher and then a much better producer. Be sure to take a look at the sheet called “Deconstructing a News Story” at the back of this package.

**NEWS** is often described as information that is of interest to a group of people. There are many factors that determine what constitutes a news story but the following ideas might work to clarify the concept for you.

**TIMELINESS** has to do with the time frame of the event. Did the event happen today, a week ago or last year? Think about the latest developments in something that happened. Most stories need to be fresh or “evergreen.”

**PROXIMITY** has to do with something that is going on within your school community. If your US Senator visits your school, it would be of interest to everyone at the school and in your community. Look inside the walls of your school for stories that will appeal to/impact the community at large.

**PROMINENCE** means that while all men and women are created equal, some grow up to be more newsworthy than others. People in places of power are often more interesting. For example, if your school principal wins ballroom dancing competitions on weekends, he would be an interesting subject for a story. He is someone everyone knows in the school and anything about his personal life would be interesting.

**CONSEQUENCE** is the importance of a story and how it will affect people. What does the story mean to the viewer? For example, think about national legislation that would change the length of the school day. What would that mean for your local school and how would it change students, teachers and parents lives?

**HUMAN INTEREST** is certainly one of the most important aspects of newsgathering. News is about people; old people, young people, smart people, funny people, hard-working people. News is about their lives and how they handle the jobs they do, how they interact with society, how they handle a crisis. And remember, news is gathered by human beings too, who need to approach stories with not only their “gut” but also their “heart.”

**UNIQUENESS** is what makes a story special. Is there a female football player? Why is she playing? How do her teammates feel about her playing? Getting the personal side of the story engages the audience even more.

All news stories should answer the **WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHY** and **WHEN**. Also, never forget the all important **HOW**: the 5 W's and an H.

All news stories should have a beginning, middle and an end. A story should have balance by ensuring that you have both sides of an issue. Make sure your story is accurate and your facts are correct. Always confirm your information with at least two sources.

## **DETERMINING THE NEWS YOU SHOULD COVER (Holding An Editorial Meeting)**

The editorial meeting will be the backbone of your decision making as you get closer to covering a story. You need to hold editorial meetings regularly and make good use of the time you invest.

Here are some tips to holding a useful, meaningful meeting.

- Schedule the meeting at a regular time, for example every Monday at 4pm. Think of it as a planning meeting. You can schedule both your long-term and short-term goals.
- Have someone prepare an agenda of stories that should be discussed. You can add and delete from the list but it will at least function as a starting point of the discussion. Every person who wants to cover news should be required to submit at least one idea per meeting. This will keep everyone thinking and keep your story list current. Be open to all ideas.
- Encourage active and full debate on stories and ideas. Some of the best story ideas will come from the most unlikely people.
- Ask: "What are people at your school or in your community talking about?"
- Ask: "Is that story interesting to a large group of people?"
- Remember to keep people on track if they wander. Focus on what you want to accomplish.
- Discuss stories completely, including the editorial "hook" of the issue. (A hook is the special reason why a story is interesting). Equally important, discuss what visuals will be available to tell the story. Be open to all ideas!
- Select a final decision-maker in the group. It might be the teacher in charge of the program or a student leader who will act as the managing editor. This person will function as a benevolent dictator who only exercises veto power when necessary.

This regularly scheduled meeting is also a good place for positive reinforcement of ideas and good work. Think of it as a "post" session, a time to discuss the pitfalls and achievements ahead.

Always end the meeting on a note of encouragement and stress teamwork.

## HOW A REPORTER GATHERS NEWS

First and foremost, keep up with current events, be it local or worldwide. Reading a newspaper every day often helps you with your story ideas and background information.

Look at the story idea, determine who would be a good person to interview -- can they contribute to the story or make it interesting? A "professional" or "Joe Q. Public" type of person may need to be interviewed for the story.

Make phone calls. Get background information through the phone interviews. A lot of times you'll uncover new, more interesting information that could give the story yet a different spin or lead you to another person you should interview.

Also make sure you think about "visuals." After all, television news is a visual medium. You'll find while out on a story you'll "see" something happen...often times that action will help you tell your story or will become your story.

A "dry" story does not have a lot of visuals. It often happens with conferences, school board meetings and other types of meetings. Try to think what other video pictures you can use to liven up your story.

Try to outline in your mind the story structure based on information you've read or gathered through the phone calls. Begin to use the sample storyboard in the back of this packet.

With that in mind, when you conduct the interview, refer to your list of questions you want to ask the subject. Be sure to ask the **5 W's** and an **H (WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY and HOW.)**

One of the most important things a reporter does is report the facts. Be sure to double-check your facts. Check your facts with at least two sources and don't report rumors. You also don't want to put your opinion into the story. **It is important to get the "expert" on tape, not your opinions.**

## WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY & HOW GET THE IDEAS FLOWING...

Now that you have decided what story to cover, you need to map out a strategy for getting it. Answer the following questions. And, keep in mind that the interviews are used to get at the emotion or passion of the story. The reporter should report the facts, and the people interviewed give the story the passion.

**Who:** Who are you going to interview? Are there two sides of the story? Remember, you will probably only have two :5 to :7 second interview sound bites. Be sure you are clear on what you want to ask. Get all the background info during a phone interview. When you do the interview for the camera, ask only three or four questions.

**What:** What is the story about? What makes it interesting? Why do we care about it? What is the outcome of the story?

**Why:** Why is the story important? What makes it unique? What are the people's motivations for doing what they are doing? This is a very important question.

**When:** Try to make this timely. That way you don't date the story. Try to make your story evergreen (able to last awhile).

**Where:** Where is the story taking place?

**How:** This is a big question and a lot of times the reason to do the story. How is it unique? How do people accomplish what they do? What is the process?

Now, after outlining the answers to these questions on the whiteboard, decide what pictures you need to support these ideas. Remember, you need 10 – 15 DIFFERENT shots to make the story interesting. Each shot should last about 3 seconds and then move on. You should shoot about 30 minutes worth of video excluding the interviews. **Remember, the tripod is your friend! You must use a tri-pod for all your shots.**

The final part of the story construction is research. What statistics do you need to support your story? Do you need an expert? Then interview them. (By the way, DO NOT believe everything on the Internet). The Internet is a great place to start, but it does not replace person-to-person interviews.

## **PLANNING YOUR STORY (BEFORE YOU SHOOT, WRITE OR EDIT)**

### **Narrow the focus of your story**

Discuss the story you want to present. Reduce it to a central issue that can be covered within : 50 seconds.

### **Decide how to balance your report**

Is there more than one side to this issue? Do we need to seek out another viewpoint? Allow someone to answer an allegation. This is critical. You must present both sides.

### **Determine who should be interviewed**

Make a list of questions. Research and contact people who can supply information both on and off camera. Be sure to ask the 5 W's and H. (Who, What, When, Where, Why, & How)

### **Pre-interview your subjects**

Ask questions ahead of time to gather facts and determine who you want to interview on camera. Put the most dynamic speaker(s) on tape! Use the others for background.

### **Plan what video will be needed**

Talk with your videographer about the story. Plan how you will marry pictures and words to tell the story.

### **The Reporter's Stand-up**

Generally, but not always, a reporter will end their story on camera. These are the necessary elements for a stand-up:

The reporter should be in front of some sort of action or in front of a sign.

The reporter's audio must be clear and audible.

The reporter must summarize the story in some way and not just tag out the story by saying "From location, I'm Jennifer Bosworth (1 second pause)"

## **FIELD PRODUCING**

Everyone on the team is responsible for field producing but there are specific jobs that should be assigned to individuals.

### **The Idea**

It all begins with an idea of a good story. Assist the reporter in researching ideas and coming up with a good angle to pursue.

### **Research**

Good research usually involves telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews and reviewing published or electronic information on the topic.

### **Seek out the Unique and Interesting**

Look for angles to the story that are unique, interesting and fascinating. Write them down...focus on those. Consider doing a series of reports on one topic if there is a lot of interesting information.

### **Think Video**

The more visual the story, the more interesting it will be. Talk to your camera person in advance...make sure he/she understands the video that enhances the story.

### **Field Work**

- Work closely with reporter and camera person. Double check your interviews, make sure you've confirmed everything and get good directions to the interview location.
- Label all your tapes/cards as they come out of camera.
- Be prepared for changes in the story once you actually start covering it.
- Take notes...write down names of people being interviewed and other facts that would help the team later in assembling the story.
- Make sure all technical aspects are handled...equipment, mics, tripod, tapes, lights before you go into the field.
- Keep interview/stand-up sites secure so nobody drifts into camera shot.
- Keep everyone on time.
- Murphy's Law Rules! If something can go wrong, there is a good chance it will. Be prepared for wind, rain, sun, snow, dead microphone batteries, dead camera batteries, no electricity, too much light, no light, bad tape, bad directions or finally, that the person you want to interview is no longer living. Always have plan B.

## “TELL ME A STORY...”

The reporter’s job is to tell the audience a story. No matter what the news, their goal is always the same: To inform viewers by putting them into the action and allowing them to experience the story.

Television reporters have the unique opportunity to incorporate video pictures and sound into their reports. Because of this, reporter voice tracks are written to “fill-in” the holes and gaps of information that the video and sound bites don’t provide.

Your goal as a FOX CT Student News reporter is to tell the story through the use of pictures and remarks from speakers, known as “sound bites.” The introduction of a sound bite must flow smoothly, without ever breaking the action or interrupting the flow of a story. **It is critical you introduce each and every speaker verbally.** You should not be using on-screen titles (supers). They will get covered by the big Student News banner placed on the lower third of every story. The story is much better if you introduce each speaker. That way the viewer gets to know them better.

### **Example:**

A little boy named Jeffrey is very sick and has a very rare heart disease. You have a sound bite of the doctor telling you about how the disease is very rare, but coming under control. How can you introduce this?

### **Not so good:**

Reporter: “We talked with Dr. John Doe and here’s what he had to say about the baby’s condition.”

Doctor: “Jeffrey’s disease is very rare but his condition is stable and should continue to improve as he gets older.”

### **Good:**

Reporter: “According to Dr. John Doe, the baby’s condition is called ‘X Syndrome’ and is a genetic disease ”

Doctor: “Jeffrey’s disease is very rare but his condition is stable and should continue to improve as he gets older.”

By having the reporter give information as well as the speaker’s name, the story continues without a break in the action. Remember, the reporter’s goal is to tell the story, not be the story. Never say “We spoke to...” or “We talked with.” Include the speaker in the story by making them the center of the action.

Another way to introduce the sound bite is to paraphrase the sentence before the sound bite you want to use.

Lets say the person being interviewed said:

“Students need to have some responsibility, but if they work all the time it can be hard on them. Students can end up having late nights, no sleep and doing poorly in school because they have too many responsibilities.”

Now, you want to introduce this guidance counselor and since your story is about how much kids work, this is a good sound bite. Here is one way to introduce this person...

**Reporter:**

“According to Guidance Counselor John Doe, students can work too much.”

**Interviewee:**

“Students can end up having late nights, no sleep and doing poorly in school because they have too many responsibilities”

That is how to paraphrase what the counselor said and it introduces the sound bite naturally. The story still flows between the reporter voiceover and the sound bite. Also, you have told us why we should care about this person...they are a guidance counselor (an expert) and their opinion is important to the story.

Remember, interviews are used to convey passion and emotion. The reporter reports the facts and the interviewee gives us a glimpse into the reason they are doing what they are doing.

# WHAT IS NEWS VIDEOGRAPHY?

## Videography

Videography is the art of recording visual images and sound on videotape. News videography is the art of documenting and recording visual images and sound for a specific news story.

News videography is telling a story with pictures and sound. Like storytelling, a news story has an open, a body, and a close. TV is a close-up medium. Establish the story, and bring the viewer into the story.

Start wide; use an establishing wide shot to set the scene. Use medium shot and close-ups to bring the viewer into the story.

## Common videography terms:

**Wide shot:** A picture that establishes a scene or location. Usually the first shot in a news story.

**Medium shot:** As a story is told in more detail, the video also gets more detailed and closer to the people in the center of the action

**Close-up:** It's just what it says. These are the shots that show the most detail and emotion in the story.

The following camera movements are used to show relationship (These are great for MTV, **but not in a news story**):

**Pan:** Horizontal movement of the camera right or left.

**Tilt:** Vertical movement of the camera up and down.

**Zoom:** Using the lens on the camera to zoom into a tighter shot or zoom out to a wider shot.

The best way to show the relationship between people and the story is through editing. Good editing will give the viewer a good wide opening shot and then bring the viewer into the story through matching the pictures with the words of the script. It is always better to show relationships through good editing rather than having lots of camera movements.

## The Camera, the Tripod, the Microphone, and the Lights

1) **Sound** comes in two varieties, (1) camera mounted mic (*aka, natural sound*) and (2) hand-held microphones for interviews. It's been said that the most important part of the video is the audio. You can't have good videography without good audio, especially natural/ambient sound to go with video. Make sure the audio levels are **consistent** throughout the story and that the audio always matches the video. For example, if you talk about a red barn, we need to see a red barn.

2) What you have for equipment is not as important as what you do with that equipment. The camera and the tripod go together – a must for interviews and stand-ups. Steady shots are achieved by using a tripod.

3) **Use a tripod at all times! NO EXCEPTIONS:** 3 legs are better than 2. A **must** for interviews.

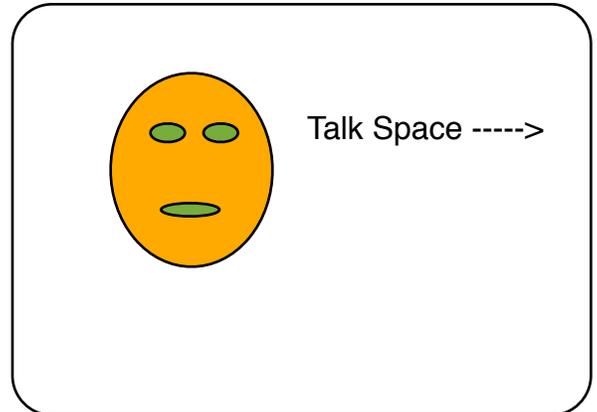
A. Keep mic close during interviews and stand-ups.

B. Natural sound must be used for all pictures – if you see it, you have to be able to hear it

4) **Shot composition:** Frame the shot correctly by using the rule of thirds. Place the person's eyes in the upper third of the viewfinder.

5) **Lighting:** Always shoot with the major light source at your back. Do not shoot your subject

sitting in front of bright windows. Use a main or key light on the face of the person being interviewed and a back light to define depth of field behind the person.



6) One way to assure the quality of your pictures, whether inside or outside, is to manually **white balance** and manually **focus** your camera EVERY TIME YOU SHOOT OR CHANGE ENVIRONMENTS. The purpose of white balancing is to tell the camera what white is...then all of the other colors will be correct. If your pictures are blue or pink, you haven't white balanced. To use the manual white balance and focus, zoom in as tight as possible on a white object -- e.g. a shirt or piece of paper. Take the camera off auto focus and then manually focus your camera; right after that, white balance by pushing the white balance button. Then zoom out. Do this every time you change environments and you will increase the chances of getting good, clean color and a clear picture.

7) When shooting stand-ups make sure they **are not** in front of a brick wall because it is a flat surface. To try to get some depth, the reporter should have some kind of action going on behind them. Or, shoot the stand-up in front of a sign. That way the reporter is placed within the context of the story.

8) When shooting interviews, never have the reporter in the shot. Only the person being interviewed should be seen.

9) During the editing process, you choose the pictures to match the script and you choose the sound bites---the short portions of interviews. Sound bites are used to explain emotion or details of the story. When introducing a speaker never say "we spoke to John".... or "Jane Smith explained...." Instead, summarize the main point of the story as a bridge to present the details the interviewee will talk about in the bite.

## INTERVIEWS

Interviews are an essential part of any news story, as they are the basis for everything else that you talk about. Here are some tips to help make your interviews better.

### Useful tips for the Videographer:

#### **Don't have the interviewee look directly into the camera**

Don't use a side profile shot of the person being interviewed, you are interested in the person's face, not their ear

Never have the interview subject hold the microphone

Never show the reporter's arm holding the microphone

Never show the reporter in your shot. Keep the focus on the person being interviewed

Changing your shots is great, but when you want to zoom in on the person being interviewed, do so only when the reporter is asking the question, not when the person being interviewed is speaking on camera

Shoulder-level shots or closer are generally best

Make sure the camera is at eye level of the person being interviewed

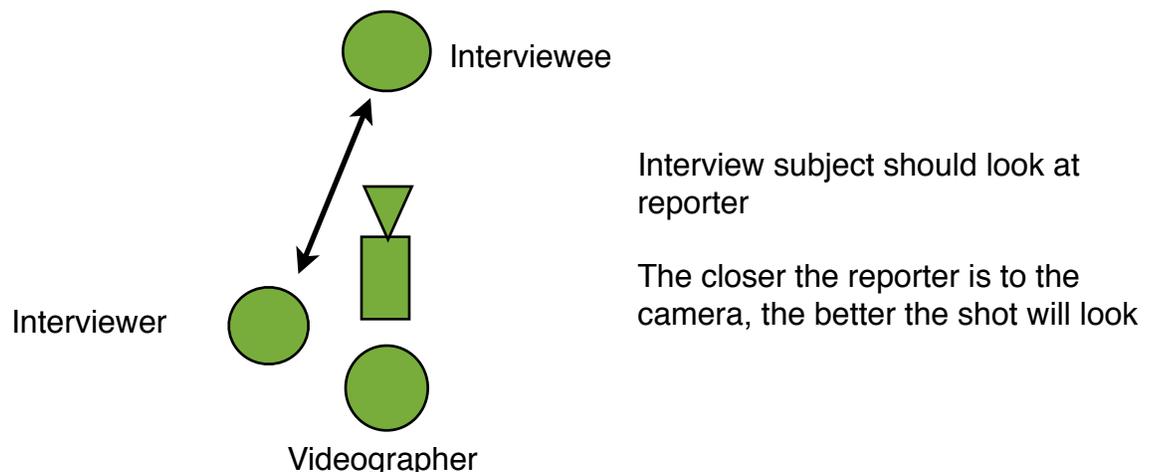
### Useful tips for the interviewer:

Tell your subject to ignore the camera and the person behind it. Although he/she may be a wonderful person, they are not a part of the conversation.

Stand within arm's length of your photographer (shoulder to shoulder is best.) Have him/her tap you when the camera is rolling so that your subject isn't distracted by the fact that your camera is running.

Treat your interview like a conversation. Start with small talk and work into the questions from there. Always keep your interview subject relaxed and always maintain eye contact.

Always thank your interviewee after you are done taping; not only is this good manners, but it will make them more willing to talk with you again.



## THE REPORTER'S STAND-UP

The purpose of a stand-up is to show the audience who the reporter actually is, but there is much more. The stand-up can take the viewer from one place or concept to another place or concept. When a reporter does a stand-up in the middle of a story it is called a "bridge". You are helping the viewer make the transition from one concept or place to another concept or place. The stand-up bridge is difficult because when you are shooting in the field, you must have a very clear idea of what the story is going to be about. If you do a stand-up bridge and then interview people and then come up with a different story when you get back to school to write it, your stand-up might not be appropriate. (That is why it is always good to have a VERY clear idea of what your story is going to be about before you go out in the field.)

### Here is an example:

You are doing a story on high school students and their part-time jobs. The idea is to demonstrate different types of jobs. So, the reporter may do their stand-up bridge starting at the check-out counter and walking over to where the student is actually doing the job. If the story is about how part-time jobs take up too much time and students don't have time to do sports, the reporter can either do a stand-up at the sporting event if the story started at a job site, or vice versa. Remember, you are trying to tell people a story and it is important to take people on a journey with you.

Another purpose for a stand-up can be to tell the part of a story that doesn't have any good pictures to go with it. Remember, TV does not do complex issues well. So, if you are trying to explain a complex issue, maybe a stand-up will help do that. The viewer won't be distracted by the pictures, they can focus on the reporter and really listen to what is being said. An example of this is "The school that was on this site burned down in 1865." Obviously, there is no school, so the reporter can be on-camera at the site.

If you do a walking stand-up you must walk with a purpose. Your job is to show the audience something or demonstrate something. You don't just walk to walk. You walk to show people a relationship between something or someone, or to demonstrate something. Also, always walk toward the camera. Never walk sideways. You will get a much better shot if the camera stays in focus and doesn't have to follow you.

### These are the necessary elements for a stand-up:

- The reporter should be in front of some sort of action or in front of a sign.
- The reporter's audio must be clear and audible if shot in front of action.
- The best type of shot for a stand-up is a head-and-shoulder shot. We don't want to see any long microphone cords in the shot
- If the reporter ends the story with a stand-up, the reporter must summarize the story in some way and not just tag out the story by saying "From location, I'm Elsa Veisor reporting...(1 second pause)"
- Never start a story with a stand-up
- Only one stand-up per story

# EDITING

Editing is the most crucial step in the process of creating a news story. If the audio and video don't match, your audience will be confused. If the audio is too low, your audience will lose interest in the story. Technical problems such as hits or dropouts on your tape, flash frames between edits, jump-cuts, not enough cover shots; all detract from the story, not matter how good you intended it to be. (There are 30 frames per second of video. A flash frame is one or two frames that aren't part of the original material; either video black or other video from a different shot. Your eye catches them, even in that 1/30th of a second. Think of when you are watching a film in a theater and you see fibers and fingerprints on the frame.)

Here is a step-by-step guide on how to assemble a good news story. Please remember to view each edit after it is completed. Even editing on a computer "non linear" editing can lead to a missed frame. Schools that are using "linear editing," or "tape to tape" edit decks can have flash frames so please view each edit after it is completed to assure that the deck did not "slip" during an edit.

## General editing rules

- 1) Lay down the reporter's voice track and any sound bites in the correct order for the entire story. Make sure to take the voice and the video of the sound bites. Then go back and insert edit the covershots or B roll. Time out the sound bites, then write to them. As a general guideline, you should have about :15 - :20 seconds of sound bites and the rest is voice-over.
- 2) The story is timed from the reporter's first word to their last word.
- 3) If you decide to use natural sound at the beginning of the story (like a dog barking or classroom sounds), we will probably figure it out.
- 4) **Never start a story with a stand-up.** Instead, jump right into the action of the story with action shots. Do not to use a pan or zoom as an opening shot. They don't give us much action.
- 5) At the end of the story, be sure to „tag out“. That means you should say: "From (location), I'm Jennifer Bosworth reporting...(1 second pause)" Please don't say you are „signing off“. That would imply that you are „live“ and in reality you are recorded.

Also, before tagging out, especially if the reporter is on camera, there must be a concluding sentence.

Example:

"The after school program has helped 20 students get even better grades. From location, I'm Jennifer Bosworth reporting...(1 second pause)"

As a reporter, you must memorize the lines you have on camera. Please don't use cue cards. Everyone can tell you are reading from them and it looks bad.

## MUSIC & FOX CT STUDENT NEWS

Generally, a hard news story does not have background music. During a broadcast there may be a music bed to go with the news segment, but most news stories do not have music. Feature stories can be different. Feature stories focus on the arts, entertainment, sometimes sports, or on some aspect of life (a human interest story). This is when music would be appropriate. Yet, there are many rules about using music for broadcast.

Because FOX CT Student News posted to YouTube, you need to follow their guidelines.

FOX CT buys the rights to a music library for on-air promotional pieces. We also subscribe to ASCAP and BMI, two major music licensing organizations. In the past, we could subscribe to the licensing organizations and then use just about any piece of music. But, the rules are changing now and this is not the case any longer. As a matter of fact, a recent ruling said that the Girl Scouts of America have to pay royalties on "GOD BLESS AMERICA." That is how sticky the rules are now.

If your school subscribes to a music library, **you will need written permission from the music library publisher stating that it is "ok for that music to be used on FOX CT for commercial broadcast"**. Written permission must be received by FOX CT in order for any FSN story to air if a school subscribes to a music library.

# STUDENT NEWS...HOW TO COVER SPORTS

Sports, while capturing the interest of millions of people, is essentially meaningless recreation. There are events in our society considerably more important than the score of tonight's game. Keep in mind that in covering sports you are merely an entertainment reporter. Sports, after all, comes at the end of the newscast for a reason.

This perspective does have its benefits however. The absence of life-and-death urgency affords the sports reporter luxuries rarely allowed reporters covering more important stories. The elements and construction of a sports story differ somewhat from news reporting. Here are a few things to keep in mind....

## 1. **Talk to fans -**

Always remember that the people watching your story at home are generally sports fans. Imagine you are describing an exciting game or dramatic play to a friend who missed the game that you have just seen. You would probably be full of enthusiasm or emotion! That's the same way you should report sports to the television audience. Capture the excitement or drama of the moment and relay that to the viewer at home. Some reporters will mistakenly say, "UConn fans will be happy with tonight's big win!" Remember, the people the reporter is speaking to are probably all "Husky" fans! Know your audience.

## 2. **It's okay to be a fan yourself -**

Sports is all about opinions. Always maintain your objectivity but never be afraid to have your own opinion. You want viewers to feel that you are one of them. You're a fan just like they are! The entertainment aspect of sports gives you the chance to incorporate more than just the facts into your story. Throw in some opinion, just like any fan watching at home would. If a quarterback played a lousy game, tell the viewer he played a lousy game. Include some analysis, draw some conclusions, and raise a few questions. Never try to slant a story toward one point of view or another, but don't be afraid to add color with opinion.

## 3. **Focus on people, not teams -**

Sports usually comes down to winning and losing but sports reporting is never about just the score. Always search for the individual perspective for your story. Don't limit your view of sports to merely one team against another. Rather, focus on the personal stories of the individuals involved, the athlete in the arena. Like fairy tales, sports has its heroes and villains, its joys and tragedies. A single football game may contain a dozen different stories concerning the players and coaches involved

## 4. **Use your video -**

Sports reporting provides the opportunity to cover moments of terrific excitement or sorrow. Crowds cheering, players celebrating or crying. The video you gather for your stories should reflect this, one of sports' most important elements. For example; if you are reporting on a basketball game, be sure your story includes as many emotional shots as possible. A happy fan jumping up and down or an angry coach screaming at the referee. Most sports reporting includes dramatic visual elements to add to your story. Remember to capture the emotion with both words and pictures.

Despite these differences, the sports reporter must meet the same responsibilities expected from reporters covering more important news events. Always check and double check your facts. It won't matter how interesting or visual your story is if the basic information is wrong. Sports are full of statistics, figures, and hard-to-pronounce names. Make sure you are correct on all counts!

# **SOME CRITICAL TIPS ON MAKING YOUR FOX CT STUDENT NEWS REPORTS MORE EFFECTIVE**

(If you don't do these things, your story probably won't get on the air)

1. Avoid recording interviews and doing "stand-ups" in a noisy area.
2. Never show the reporter on camera with the person they are interviewing -- no 2-shots of interviewee and interviewer.
3. Don't let the person being interviewed handle the microphone.
4. Avoid "jump cuts." A jump cut happens when two shots are edited together which are similar subject matter, framing or angle. Make sure to cover the jump cut by using close-ups or wide shots of the audience or close up of reporter.

## **TOP 10 REASONS WHY YOUR VIDEO DIDN'T GET AIR**

- Didn't manually focus
- Didn't frame shot using the rule of thirds
- Didn't manually white balance
- Jump cuts
- Didn't use a tripod
- Stand-ups in front of a brick wall
- Shot video in front of a window
- Didn't present both sides of the story and didn't cover the 5 W's & the H.
- Sound quality inconsistent
- Introduced speaker by saying "We spoke to John...." or "Jane explained...."

## **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED PUBLICATIONS**

The Bare Bones Camera Course for Film & Video, by Tom Schroepel, 4705 Bayview Avenue, Tampa, FL 33611 (\$6.95 soft cover). Order directly from him or it's available at Middlesex Community College bookstore.

Television Production Handbook, Herbert Zell; Wadsworth Publishing, Belmont, CA. Standard textbook, probably around \$50.

TV Production Disciplines and Techniques, Thomas Burrows, Lynne Gross, Donald Wood; Brown & Benchmark Publishers, Madison, WI. Probably around \$50, available at Middlesex Community College bookstore.

## FIELD PRODUCTION CHECKLIST

Here is a partial list of important things to take with you on a shoot:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Camera
- \_\_\_\_\_ Camera Batteries
- \_\_\_\_\_ Microphone(s)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Microphone Batteries
- \_\_\_\_\_ AC Power Cords
- \_\_\_\_\_ Memory cards or Fresh, New (not previously used) Video Tapes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tripod
- \_\_\_\_\_ Duct Tape
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lights (if available)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Light Gels (if available)
- \_\_\_\_\_ List of questions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pens and Notebooks
- \_\_\_\_\_ Directions to Shoot
- \_\_\_\_\_ Names and Phone Numbers of Contacts
- \_\_\_\_\_ Proper Clothing for the Situation

## DECONSTRUCTING A NEWS STORY

1) How long is the story?

How much is interview, natural sound, b-roll, stand-up?

2) Where is the stand-up?

Is it a bridge or a close? If it is a bridge, does the stand-up take the viewer from one place to another?

3) Did they use a tripod? Did they use good shot composition?

4) Are the shots interesting? Do they help tell the story or move it along?

5) Does the writing enhance or detract from the story? Is there a strong "hook" to the story? Is the story told from a personal perspective vs. a general overview?

6) What kind of shots did they use to introduce the people in the story? Two shot, b-roll, wide shot at a press conference?

7) How many places did they visit to do the story?

8) What did you learn from the story?

9) Was it a feature, spot news, general news, investigative story or sports?

10) Does the reporter seem like they are having a conversation with the viewer or are they lecturing?

11) How could you improve it?