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# NEWS GATHERING

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Ask most people what they listen to the radio for, and the vast majority will put news near the top of their list. The listening public have an unceasing hunger to hear what is new. Listeners value good unbiased news coverage very highly. Often the search for good news coverage will affect listening habits in a big way. If radio news within one particular country is not good, listeners may buy Short Wave radios so that they can hear news from elsewhere.

## WHAT IS NEWS?

News must be different, and it must be fresh. If the listener has heard it before, it is not news. If they think it ordinary or predictable it is not news. News is something that grabs the attention of the listener, something that they cannot remain indifferent about.

“News is what a chap who doesn't care much about anything wants to read. And it's only news until he's read it, then it's dead.” Evelyn Waugh

One of the great skills of a news gatherer is to recognise real news, as distinct from the mundane, the predictable, or for that matter the downright falsehood. News must always be Relevant, Immediate, and Interesting. It may also be dramatic, or even entertaining.

### **Ask Yourself**

Is it current?

Is it true?

Does it matter?

Even if it does matter, do we care?

Should the listener know this?

## **TYPES OF NEWS**

There are a variety of types of news. Their type will affect how they are handled, and may affect what priority is given to them.

**The set piece** - Events such as a scheduled visit by a major foreign dignitary.

**Breaking story** - This is a story such as a disaster, accident, hijack or plane crash.

**People stories** - Famous personalities, or even someone quite unknown who makes news.

**General or local interest** - Stories that may affect the audience make news.

## **STORY TYPES**

**Within the categories there are many different types of story, these may include;**

Emergencies  
Crime  
Government  
Development and construction projects  
Controversial issues  
Work and Employment  
Health  
Human interest  
Personalities  
Sport  
Special local interest  
Weather  
Travel  
Animals

## **NEWS SOURCES**

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With this vast variety of types of story, the next question that needs to be asked is, where do you find such stories? The answer will vary, but here is a list of the sources commonly used in gathering news.

### **THE NEWSROOM DIARY**

Information will have been gathered together in advance in a Newsroom Diary.

### **TELEPHONE CALLS**

Most newsrooms will make "check calls" the local emergency services, such as police, ambulances and fire brigade, on a regular basis.

### **EMERGENCY SERVICES RADIO**

In some countries you may legally monitor the radio transmissions used by the cars, ambulances and fire appliances of the emergency services.

### **RELEASES AND CONFERENCES**

These need to be treated with caution.

### **POLITICIANS**

They may be easy to get, but not always the ideal sources of real news.

### **FREELANCE CONTRIBUTORS**

Or 'Stringers'

## **NEWS AGENCIES**

A number of commercial organisations specialise in news gathering and distribution. So a newsroom can get news copy direct from a teleprinter in the newsroom which is connected to the news agency source.

Perhaps the most famous, and best news agency is Reuters. But there are many others, large ones like Associated Press (A.P.), United Press International (U.P.I.), Press Association (P.A.), Agence France Press (A.F.P.). There are also many other smaller ones, some of which can have strong area bias, and occasionally a strong political bias (such as T.A.S.S. the Russian news agency).

Because accuracy in news is of prime importance, most stations will have a policy of not reporting a story purely on the word of one press agency alone. Normally they would take at least two agencies' reports before going on air with a story.

## **THE INTERNET**

A vast amount of information. The News person needs to find those sites that have stories that are applicable for the target audience.

## **TELE TEXT**

Not every country offers this service. National and local sites available.

## **RADIO STATIONS**

Listening to other stations in the area gives you a good feel of what information is available.

## **THE NEWSROOM**

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In the normal newsroom, a number of techniques of news gathering and ways of organising information are used.

## **THE REPORTER**

This is the 'on the ground' news man or woman. Their job is to hunt down the news.

## **CONTACTS FILES**

Any good reporter will build a list of 'contacts'; people to whom they can go for information or comment on particular subjects.

## **THE NEWSROOM DIARY**

A lot of stories can be planned for.

## **FUTURES FILE**

There will also be a file in which news relating to future days is stored.

## **ARCHIVES**

The archive file can be of great use if the information in it can be got at easily.

## **THE SPIKE**

This is used to store items of interest that do not eventually make the programme, it may either be a metal spike, or a wire basket.

## **THE WASTE PAPER BIN**

In a big newsroom this is where most paper ends up.