News Writing and Editing Skills: Story Structure, Sub-Editing and Digital Journalism

21 – 25 June 2027
Paris - Right Bank business hotel



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Introduction:

News writing and editing standards slip when copy reaches the desk with the key fact buried in paragraph four, unattributed quotes, unchecked figures and headlines that promise more than the story delivers, and each correction erodes audience trust. This Core Concept course gives reporters, sub-editors and communication staff a working method for judging what is news, structuring stories with the inverted pyramid, writing leads, headlines and captions, verifying sources and sub-editing to a house style for print, web, social and short video. Participants compile a News Story Portfolio and Newsdesk Style Sheet.

Course Objectives:

- Judge the newsworthiness of incoming events and announcements using recognised news values and rank stories for publication
- Structure hard news stories with the inverted pyramid and write summary leads that answer who, what, when, where, why and how
- Gather material through planned interviews and a documented source hierarchy, and attribute quotes accurately
- Write headlines, standfirsts and captions, and convert official announcements and press releases into publishable news stories
- Sub-edit copy to length and house style, verify claims and user content before publication, and publish corrections transparently
- Adapt one news story for web, social media and a short video script, and assemble a News Story Portfolio and Newsdesk Style Sheet

Target Audience:

- Staff who report and write news stories for newspapers, agencies, broadcasters and news websites
- Desk staff who sub-edit, headline and check copy before publication
- Media unit staff in public bodies who turn official decisions and events into news items
- Corporate communication staff who write news for internal channels, newsrooms and websites
- Digital and social media staff who publish news updates, posts and short videos

Course Outline:

Day 1: News Values, News Judgement and the Newsroom Copy Flow

- Galtung and Ruge News Factors: Timeliness, Proximity, Conflict and Unexpectedness
- Harcup and O'Neill Updates: Shareability, Good News and the Outlet's Own Agenda
- Story Selection Exercise: Ranking a Queue of Wire Items and Announcements
- Newsroom Roles and Copy Flow: Reporter, Sub-Editor, Desk Editor and Publisher
- Current-State Copy Audit: Scoring Recent Published Stories Against a News Writing Checklist

Day 2: Story Structure Models and Writing the Lead

- Inverted Pyramid Structure: Ranking Facts by Importance and Cutting from the Bottom
- Summary Lead Construction with Who, What, When, Where, Why and How
- Delayed, Anecdotal and Quote Leads and the Burying the Lead Error
- Nut Graph, Background Paragraph and Attribution Placement
- Hourglass and Chronological Structures for Incident, Court and Meeting Reports

Day 3: Interviewing, Sourcing and Writing News Copy

- Interview Planning: Question Ladder, Open and Closed Questions and Note-Taking Record
- Source Hierarchy: Primary Documents, Named Officials, Specialists and Eyewitnesses
- Quotation Handling: Direct, Indirect and Partial Quotes with Neutral Attribution Verbs
- Press Release to News Story Conversion: Finding the Angle and Stripping Promotional Language
- Headlines, Standfirsts and Photo Captions: Length Limits, Active Verbs and Caption Formula

Day 4: Sub-Editing, Verification, Ethics and Digital Formats

- Sub-Editing Pass: Cutting to Length, Clarity, Grammar, Names and Numbers Check
- House Style Sheet Built on AP Stylebook Conventions with an Arabic News Style Overview
- Verification Handbook Routine for User-Generated Text, Images and Video
- SPJ Code of Ethics Applied to Accuracy, Minimising Harm and Published Corrections
- Writing for the Web and Social Platforms: Scannable Paragraphs, Subheads and Post Formats

Day 5: Newsdesk Case Work and the News Story Portfolio

- Case Study: Breaking Incident Story Written, Sub-Edited and Updated Through the Day
- Case Study: Public Service Announcement Rewritten as a Web Story and Social Posts
- Short Vertical Video Script and Multimedia Package Plan for One Story
- Arabic and English Versions of One Story: Structure and Style Differences Compared
- News Story Portfolio and Newsdesk Style Sheet Drafting with Peer Desk Review

Skills You Will Gain:

- News Judgement
- Inverted Pyramid Structuring
- Lead and Headline Writing
- Interview and Source Management
- Quotation and Attribution Accuracy
- Copy Sub-Editing
- Content Verification
- Cross-Platform News Adaptation

Why Attend This Course:

- Return with a News Story Portfolio and Newsdesk Style Sheet that your desk can adopt for daily copy
- Spend less desk time rewriting copy because stories arrive with the lead, attribution and structure already right
- Publish fewer corrections by applying a repeatable check of names, numbers, quotes and user content before release
- Compare desk practice with reporters, sub-editors and communication staff from media outlets, public bodies and companies

Conclusion:

Readers decide in the first lines whether a story is worth their time, and they judge an outlet by the accuracy of every name, number and quote. The week moves from news values and story selection through the inverted pyramid and lead writing to interviewing, sourcing, headlines and captions, then to sub-editing, verification, ethics, corrections and digital formats. The final day applies the method to breaking and public service stories across text, social and short video, and closes with a News Story Portfolio and Newsdesk Style Sheet.