



# Glossary of Media Terms

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## A-D

**"-30-":** 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 the reports.

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

**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.

**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.

**Biographer:** 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 first paragraph in a biography or 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."

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

**Callback:** Telephone follow-up to a printed invitation or advisory.

**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; this usually appears at the beginning of the first paragraph.

**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 (compare to inverted pyramid).

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

**Dub:** To make a copy of a TV or radio appearance on video or audiotape.

**E-N Editing:** The act of rewriting, viewing, listening, and cutting print publications, video, or audio in order to perfect the story.

**Editor:** The person who edits stories for reporters before they are published.

**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 focus on special sections or special news reporting.

**Embargo:** Any restriction placed on when specific information may be used, often stating the desired date and time of release.

**Exclusive:** A news item or feature article that only one newspaper, magazine, or television station may carry.

**Feature:** A special or prominent article in a newspaper or magazine that is not a "hard news" story but that is 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 and 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 sign that appears midchest identifying the person and his or her company.

**Inverted Pyramid:** A style of writing in which the most comprehensive 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 article on page one, which may have a headline that extends across the entire top of the page.

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

**Letters to the Editor:** The reader's opportunity to congratulate, discuss, or criticize an article he or she has read.

**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 in each publication's issue. It includes an address and telephone number.

**Media Alert - also referred to as a news advisory or tip sheet:** A brief summary of the basic facts surrounding an event, often used when time is too short, or the occasion does not warrant a printed invitation.

**Media Kit:** An organized package of information that includes background information on a general topic or on special events.

**Network:** A chain of broadcast or radio stations controlled and operated as a unit, often using the same editorial material.

**News Conference:** An arranged gathering of media representatives to announce and explain a significant and newsworthy subject or event.

**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 material other than advertising.

**News Peg:** An immediate event that provides an occasion for printing a feature.

**News Release:** Also referred to as a press release: The most common written form of public relations, usually used to announce a client's news and information.

**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, will explain what the story is about, so as to keep the reader interested.

**O-R Off-Lead:** The second most important story on page one.

**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 referred to as a position paper:** A written comment prepared for the purpose of responding consistently to any question from the media regarding a particular or controversial issue.

**On Background:** When a quote or information may be used for publication, provided that the source is not identified by name.

**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:** An article written by an expert that is positioned on the page opposite the editorial page. Not to be confused with Letters to the Editor.

**Periodical:** A publication circulated at regular intervals, such as a weekly or monthly.

**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.

**Public Relations:** A variety of skills and tactics developed to create favorable opinion for a person, event, or product that ultimately supports the firm's bottom line. You turn to a public relations firm to help you achieve media coverage.

**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.

**Reach:** The geographic area of the audience and the number of readers, listeners, or viewers who can access the media in any region.

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

**Responsive Writing:** The act of correcting or capitalizing on a situation by writing to fill in omitted details or otherwise add information that better explains a subject, points out an error, or promotes an issue.

**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.

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

**Shirttail:** A short, related news item under another dateline at the bottom of an article.

**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 has said something that is considered by those editing the speech or interview to be the most important point.

**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 to matters of grammar and style.

**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.

**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 and radio and television stations.