



National Council for the Training of Journalists

Careers Brochure

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INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century journalism has converged. In the past the different branches of journalism were clear, but today all media are publishing on the web and the skills required to work across all platforms are integrated. Traditional broadcast skills and web skills are needed by print journalists.

You can start a career in any platform, and it's not a necessity to start on a small newspaper, niche magazine or tiny cable channel. You could quite easily begin on a large regional daily, top consumer website or at a major broadcasting corporation.

Some of the journalists have learned their trade on the job, but many will have undergone some kind of formal training.

Not everyone who has undergone formal training is brilliant at their job, and it's by no means true that those who picked things up as they went along are bad journalists.

But what training does is give able people a short cut. It saves them time by teaching them the basics of journalism quickly, accurately and effectively. It means they don't need to learn by trial and error. They can get it right first time.

"Don't join because you are 'good at English', or if you baulk at the thought of knocking on the door of bereaved families or asking awkward questions of people who don't want you there, or if you don't like standing out in the cold for long hours."

David Wooding, chief political editor, *News of the World*

"I'm most proud of getting my 100 words per minute shorthand – the toughest exam I've ever done."

Andrew Porter, political editor, *The Daily Telegraph*

"My father was editor of the *Evening Standard* so newspapers were in the blood. Despite that I have never had any formal training and it shows since I have zero shorthand and have to rely on time-consuming tape recorders or PA."

Patrick Wintour, political editor, *The Guardian*

And the NCTJ is second-to-none in setting the standards for journalism training. Through its exams and the courses which carry its accreditation, it equips would-be journalists to get their first job in the profession, and helps working journalists progress to the next rung up the ladder.

An NCTJ qualification equips you with the skills you need to be an effective reporter. It gives you a solid grounding in shorthand, news writing, law and how government works. With an NCTJ qualification on your CV, a prospective employer knows you have grasped the basics.

Many successful journalists, in all branches of the trade, are thankful for their NCTJ training. And many others, who didn't have that advantage, recognise it would have been a huge help if they did.

NEWSPAPERS

Many trainees begin as newspaper reporters. It's a logical first step because of the comparatively large number of opportunities and because the experience will be highly valuable in anything you move on to. A good newspaper reporter has the essential skills needed to report in any other medium.

Who takes on trainees?

Regional newspaper groups take on trainees, at various levels. Some will be school leavers who they indenture and send on block release training courses, although it must be said this career route was established in the past and is now rare. Others will have achieved a pre-entry qualification, or have graduated with a journalism degree. Some will have completed a postgraduate course in journalism. Others will be graduates whose degrees are not in journalism and who they will indenture and send on block release. Most national newspapers take on postgraduates who have their NCTJ certificate, but not many - often just two or three a year.

What do they want from you?

- A keen, hard working, flexible, inquisitive, inexpensive dogsbody
- On a provincial paper, they'll send you to all the places bread and butter stories are found – courts, councils, talent contests and flower shows. They may give you a geographic patch to cover
- On a national, you'll do plenty of graveyard shifts – Sundays, lates and earlys
- You'll be there to man the phones and to react should a crisis happen. It can. Both the Asian Tsunami and the Brighton bomb broke when news desks were manned by skeleton staffs



NEWS AGENCIES

News agencies come in all shapes and sizes. Perhaps the most famous is Reuters, which covers the world. It competes in the UK with several other major agencies, such as the Press Association (PA), which supplies national and international news.

But there are also many smaller agencies. They include well-resourced regional agencies which supply all categories of news and pictures from a city or other substantial geographic area; specialist agencies which cover a particular field such as sport, health or showbiz; and one-man local outfits that might concentrate on a particular crown court.

News agencies differ from other media organisations in that, by and large, their role is not to publish in their own branded newspapers, TV stations or other outlets. They supply information to other news organisations which either publish it as supplied to them, with or without a credit, or use it as raw material to be added in to its own reporting. Reports in newspapers will often contain agency copy in addition to that created by its bylined reporter. Increasingly, major news agencies supply material to websites and for distribution via other electronic media such as mobile phones or PDAs. This material often retains the agency's branding.

Who takes on trainees?

Reuters has an in-house training scheme, and some small agencies take trainees.

What do they want from you?

The major agencies often require fluency in a second language and expect a deep interest in and knowledge of current affairs. This comes in addition to the universal requirement that you are a keen, hard working, flexible, inquisitive, inexpensive dogsbody – and that you have a ready acceptance of long days and antisocial hours.

As a reporter on a small agency, you will find yourself in a very tough environment. Often, when a big story breaks, the Fleet Street pack descends on an area. The local agency only makes money if its reporter gets facts or an angle everyone else has missed. Knowing your patch inside out and having brilliant contacts is the only way to succeed.

What will you learn?

On a major agency you will undergo an intense rotation around the key desks, and learn everything from financial reporting to sport and back to politics. On a small agency you'll be learning how to survive in the most competitive newsgathering environment imaginable.

How to improve your chances of getting a job

Be able to demonstrate you have a real interest in news, and you have taken every opportunity to gain work experience on newspapers, magazines or at press agencies. Editing or contributing to school or university magazines is a good start. Having work experience placements is another. And if you can show cuttings – ideally with bylines – so much the better.

MAGAZINES

There are 9,000-odd magazines in the UK, covering every subject you can think of, and some you probably can't. Having a general interest in working on magazines won't be enough to convince an editor you should be employed on theirs. You need to know what magazine you want to work on, why you want to work on it, and how you will be an asset to the editorial team.

Some specialist magazines may want you to have a particular degree – such as engineering, science, or computing – which gives you expertise in the area the magazine covers.

Who takes on trainees?

Graduates make up more than 70 per cent of entrants to journalism, and many magazine companies recruit from pre-entry certificate or postgraduate courses in journalism. Increasingly, they find they can pick and choose from ready-qualified potential employees and have no need to train their own new joiners.

What do they want from you?

A passion for magazines in general, plus a demonstrable interest in the area the specific magazine covers. This should be backed up with basic skills that mean you will be useful from day one.

A qualification in journalism may not be essential, but if you have one it will show that you have sufficient training to be able to research and write. You'll have the advantage over other applicants if your course has taught you a bit about subbing and if you are familiar with different software and design packages.

What will you learn?

Magazine teams tend to be small, and you'll often find yourself doing a bit of everything. The first rung on the editorial ladder is often editorial assistant, which involves a lot of admin work but also provides the opportunity to research articles for other writers, do some writing yourself, maybe source photographs and sub or rewrite contributed copy.

How to improve your chances of getting a job

Be able to demonstrate that you have taken every opportunity to learn about magazines and work on them. Editing or contributing to school or university magazines is a good start. Having work experience placements is another bonus. If you can also show a portfolio of cuttings – ideally with bylines – so much the better.

Don't turn down any opportunity that might lead to a job. There are plenty of journalism graduates who have taken unpaid work placements on a magazine they really want to work for, and who are taken on at the end of the placement. Once you have your foot on the first rung, opportunities often develop.

ONLINE

The internet had a false start as a major source of news and entertainment – and jobs for journalists – at the end of the Nineties. After the dot.com bubble burst many news websites either closed or scaled down their original content. But today, prospects are good, and online is a viable alternative starting point to newspapers, magazines, TV and radio.

Online combines content in forms traditionally associated with one or other of the older, established media, so it will have text-based news and features, photo-journalism, audio and video. Working online, you get to master them all.

Who takes on trainees?

Many ISPs plus newspaper, magazine and broadcaster-linked sites have dedicated teams of online journalists. With budgets tight there are often greater opportunities for trainees than in traditional media, but don't expect too many formal traineeships – it's much more likely you will start with unpaid work experience won because of your computer skills and awareness of the potential and practices of online journalism.

What do they want from you?

Salaries can be lower than in other media, because incomes and budgets are restricted. You'll need to be even more flexible than a trainee on one of the more traditional media, because 24-hour working is common. They'll expect you to understand the web and its audience. They'll want you to turn your hand to a very wide range of skills, some of them traditionally associated with reporting, some with subbing and production.

What will you learn?

In essence, online journalism requires the same skills as its off-line equivalents. However, even greater brevity is required, because fewer words can be displayed on a computer screen – and even less on a PDA or mobile phone screen – than on the page of a newspaper or magazine. So you'll learn to write with even greater economy.

The web also allows stories to be told in other than strictly linear format, and you will learn these alternative methods of presentation. There is far less original newsgathering undertaken online. Many sites tend to re-purpose material gathered for other media. This can mean that online journalism is deskbound.

But if there is less newsgathering, there is also greater opportunity to present news in ways particularly suited to the web. Repeated updating of items, 24 hours a day, is one characteristic of online news. Another is that the web lends itself to a wealth of background information. So you'll learn about creating special reports on major news themes with time-lines, forums and other innovations

Online journalists are heavily involved in production. If you don't know it already, you'll learn html, basic content management systems (CMS) and probably rudimentary Photoshop as well, plus basic audio and video-editing skills.

How to improve your chances of getting a job

Show that you are steeped in the online ethos. Demonstrate a wide knowledge of online news and entertainment sites and a clear understanding of how news can best be presented online. Know that interaction with the user is a vital ingredient of a website's offering. Online, you don't just tell readers the news; you interact with them, enabling them to express their opinions about it and discuss its implications.



TV AND RADIO

To get on the first rung in broadcasting, you need the skills of a good reporter. But you'll also need to be a natural performer, comfortable in front of the camera or the microphone. In TV, pictures matter as much as words. On radio, particularly with lighter pieces, sounds can be as important as language.

Who takes on trainees?

A few trainees go straight into TV on an in-house journalist trainee scheme, but these are hugely over-subscribed and extremely competitive. More manage to win a traineeship in local radio, but most journalists who work in TV and radio started on newspapers and moved media once they had mastered basic reporting skills.

What do they want from you?

- They'll expect you to have a wealth of relevant work experience to show you are determined to break into news broadcasting. As in any branch of journalism, you must show that you understand the needs of the audience
- They'll expect you to be steeped in media – to know which story will appeal to which radio or TV news programme, why, and how it should be handled to make it right for that outlet
- You'll need to come up with good ideas and know how to research and execute them
- Shorthand is extremely useful, particularly if you have to rush out of a court hearing and deliver two minutes straight from your notebook
- You'll also need to be able to conduct an interview and have a good broadcasting voice

What will you learn?

- How to be a better reporter – so you get the story
- How to be a better storyteller – so you tell it well
- How to be a better editor, so you draw your words, those of the interviewees, and the evocative sounds or telling pictures into an effective whole, or package.

How to improve your chances of getting a job

Start small, in hospital, student or community radio. Tape an entire day's news bulletins and analyse them to see how stories fit into the whole and how they are developed. Think of fresh ways to handle stories that come round regularly.

"I never trained, never 'went into journalism', never thought about a career. After 35 years, all I can say is – have principles, and enjoy the job."

Kate Adie, BBC

"It is often said you are only as good as your last story - in fact you are only as good as your next story."

Edward Stourton, presenter, Radio 4 Today programme



PHOTOGRAPHY

Press photography is an incredibly competitive area. Picture editors on national newspapers are inundated with calls from very able photographers looking for day shifts, on which they will do a number of jobs for a set fee.

Nevertheless, good photographers are always in demand. Very few have the journalistic ability to capture the essence of a story in a single image – whether it's a straight news story or a feature. On magazines, where very high photographic skills are also required, the really good photographer will truly shine, and always be in demand.

The burgeoning paparazzi side of press photography has tended to give news photographers a bad name. The paps, who are often not trained photographers, tend to work as freelancers and channel their material through a particular agency which represents them and sells on their behalf to newspapers and magazines. They make their money by snapping celebrities in public places, often when they do not wish to be photographed. Their work has little to do with photographic ability, it's all about getting a snatched shot that makes a point: pop star X looking fat/pregnant, TV presenter Y looking drunk.

A good news photographer has all the news sense and eye for a story of a wordsmith. His or her job is harder because there is no room for poetic licence. The photographer has to be there when news happens – he can't cover his back by picking it up later.

Who takes on trainees?

Some local newspapers, some national newspapers and some magazines. However, most press photographers can't find traineeships and go freelance straight after college.

What do they want from you?

They'll want you to be a journalist through and through, with all the news sense and hunger to get the story that they see in their reporters. You'll need to be self-motivated and hard working. You'll need a fundamental understanding of digital photography, your own cameras and the computer equipment to send in pictures straight from a job. You'll also need a full driving licence.

What will you learn?

You'll develop news sense, learn how to tell a story through your images, how to charm people into posing for you, how to work with reporters and give editors what they want.

How to improve your chances of getting a job

Demonstrate that you have all the attributes of a good news reporter. Have a comprehensive portfolio of published press work and a list of work placements.



It can be difficult to break straight in to sports journalism. Specific degree and other sports training courses have been established, and some trainees manage to get taken on by broadcasters, specialist sports news agencies or sports websites, but it is generally considered that a basic grounding in news reporting is a valuable pre-requisite for an aspiring sports journalist.

Who takes on trainees?

Some broadcasters and specialist sports news agencies. There are good opportunities for freelance sports match reporters to file to the major sports agencies, which supply a wide range of newspapers, websites and other outlets, but to win such work you will need to demonstrate a good track record of published work.

What do they want from you?

All the attributes of a good news reporter, plus a passion for sport and an encyclopaedic knowledge of any particular sport you are to cover.

“If you want to be a sports journalist, have an interest in more than just football. And don’t say: “I just want to watch sport and get paid.”

James Toney, managing editor Sportsbeat/News Associates agency

What will you learn?

Depending on what medium you are in, to sum up the main moves in a game with brevity and precision, in either a voice or word report. Often newspaper and website reports are filed in sections during the match, often a couple of paragraphs at the start, some more during the first half, at half time, during the second half and with the intro being tacked on the minute the game ends. For radio and TV, you may be given a minute or perhaps two to sum up a game.

How to improve your chances of getting a job

Have a clear, demonstrable interest in sports journalism supported with work placements and, ideally, bylined cuttings.

NEWSPAPERS

Whether you start on a weekly, an evening or a national newspaper, you will be doing the basics. First and foremost, you’ll be learning how to be a news reporter.

On a local paper you might start the day making calls to police, fire and ambulance contacts, write up the stories at your desk over lunch, spend the afternoon with a mix of golden weddings, retirements, and a vox pop in the high street and finish the day at a council committee meeting.

In the first few weeks you may shadow a more experienced reporter, writing up your own version of the stories you cover alongside him, and then comparing your version with what he has written.

Then there are the unexpected events, from a house fire to a fatal car crash. Sooner or later you will have to go on a death knock, where you visit the home of someone who has died to talk to their spouse or family.

You may be given a specific area or patch to cover. This is great training; it gets you into the habit of bringing in your own stories, forces you to meet and talk to a wide range of people, and underlines the importance of contacts.

Some reporters make a note of everyone they speak to in a contacts book, cross indexing their names with the roads on which they live, so that when anything happens in an area, they have someone they know who they can call.

There will also be less routine stories. News happens in even the quietest places.

If you are lucky enough to be a trainee on a national newspaper, your training may take you into various specialisms after you have had a good solid stint on news. While on news you are likely to do your share of late and early shifts, bank holidays and Sundays. The advantage of these is that, if something major does break, you stand a good chance of covering it. Reputations can begin to be made on such occasions.

Once you have proven yourself on news, you may have stints on city and business, sport, features or the diary, depending on your interests and aptitudes. You may be able to shadow one or more specialists for a time. You will also be writing for the newspaper website. This can give you an insight into which specialism you might like to pursue. You could get a chance to sample life as, for example, a political, science or health correspondent.

Whatever you do, you’ll be learning about deadlines and how to handle them. You’ll be learning to work as part of a team, how to cope when you find yourself as part of a press pack, reporters from all the national newspapers chasing the same story and trying to do their rivals down.

You’ll learn about doorstepping, where you wait ages for someone to come home and then get the door slammed unceremoniously in your face. You’ll learn how tact and persistence can open doors that others have failed to unlock.

And, one day, you’ll get your first story to carry an ‘exclusive’ tag. And when that happens, you’ll know you are on your way.

“The best thing about my training was working all the time – apart from day-release – and being with a group of similar-minded trainees. On the *Tavistock Times* there were four of us, the editor and one senior journalist so we had the whole paper pretty much to ourselves. The worst part was working in the Truro office – one senior journalist, one school-leaver and me. Cornwall was pretty lonely.”

Sarah Boseley, health editor, *The Guardian*

“I was never given basic training as a reporter. I missed that in later years. If I could have done formal training such as NCTJ, I would have jumped at the chance.”

Beverley Glick, commissioning editor, *The Sunday Express*



Photograph: Amy Husband, South Wales Evening Post

NEWS AGENCIES

On a major agency with a graduate recruitment programme, you will probably begin with a couple of months induction, where they make sure you know the basics: that you can write a good news story, that your law, shorthand and general knowledge are up to scratch.

From there you will probably start a string of attachments to the main reporting desks – general news, financial, political and so on. You will be overseen by a senior person on the desk, and perhaps mentored by a more experienced reporter. Within a few months you will be covering major stories unaided, interviewing senior figures in business, politics and other fields, and seeing your stories printed prominently in a wide range of newspapers, on websites and used as the basis for radio and television reports.

The aim is to create a structured environment in which you can broaden your experience, hone your skills and build up that all-essential network of contacts. If all goes well, and the agency is international, you can expect to be assigned to an overseas bureau after a year or so. If the agency is purely domestic, you'll move into a permanent position on whichever desk for which you showed greatest aptitude.

If you are with a small agency, things may be much less structured. Once again, the emphasis will be on training you to be a good reporter. If the agency covers a geographic patch, developing a comprehensive network of contacts will be even more important than for your rivals on the local newspaper or radio station.

In almost everything you do you will be competing with those rivals. They only need you if you have knowledge or information that they do not have. If the Fleet Street pack descends to cover a big story in your area, you will probably file your copy to all the nationals, but they will only use the information their own reporter has not been able to glean. You might get one paragraph in a long report, but you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that it is there because your reporting skills outshone the staffer's – at least in some detail or angle.

You will often be asked to do things on behalf of a national newspaper or magazine. For instance, a national may get a local agency to call round to a person they wish to interview, or to find someone who they believe lives on your patch but who they can't easily trace themselves.

Your value to your agency depends entirely on you getting results. To outwit all the opposition, you need to know everything there is to know about your patch.

"I succeeded by getting some good news stories that started earning the agency money. I was actually at university in London but I didn't tell anyone and skipped lectures for shifts. I got a few exclusives that caught the *News of the World's* attention and that set me up."

James Toney, managing editor News Associates/ Sportsbeat agency

MAGAZINES

Your first step on the magazine ladder will probably be as an editorial assistant. With so many people desperate to get in to magazine journalism, editors are spoilt for choice. They have many offers of newly-trained graduates from practical journalism courses prepared to undertake unpaid work placement.

They will pick the best and, if they are looking for an editorial assistant, pick from the cream of those they have had in the office and whose work they are able to make a judgement on. Once in, you are the dogsbody – even though you probably have a degree and perhaps a postgraduate qualification in journalism.

Magazines vary widely in the fields they cover, and in how well resourced they are but, whatever the publication, an editorial assistant will be seen as a fixer. If a writer or one of the editors needs a hand organising a feature, or some other project, you will be the one to do it. You'll jump in the taxi to take the clothes to the fashion shoot; you'll go through the cuttings to check background information for the writer of an article. In short, you will help out anywhere and everywhere.

You'll assist writers by making some of their calls, and contribute a few paragraphs to pieces they are writing. If a time-consuming ring-round of celebrities is needed to accompany a main feature, you'll hit the phones. If your star interviewer wants to line up another batch of interviewees, you'll be the one to contact their agents, send the cuttings and start negotiations.

You'll quickly gain a clear picture of how the magazine works and what everyone does on it. Little by little, you'll be given responsibility for projects. You might begin by running a small features item – perhaps finding the subjects and briefing the writers for the 'What's in my fridge' column. Do that well and you'll be allowed to write your own pieces. If you are coming up with a stream of ideas, and selling them well to the relevant editor, they will eventually reward you by allowing you to research and write one of them unaided.

You may help out on the editing side, giving copy an initial fact-check and subbing it for style.

Within a year, you'll be an effective all-rounder, able to help anyone with anything, and solve any problem. At this time you'll be asking for a step up and a title such as feature writer. If there are clearly no openings on your magazine, you'll be sniffing around other titles in the group, or your rivals, to see if they can give you your next challenge.

"The worst thing about my training was the lack of structure and no-one to give feedback. I didn't have anyone to iron out any mistakes or bad habits I was getting into. But any training I have had has been formal and external and was very useful to get an independent perspective from professionals."

Katharine Sanderson, science correspondent, *Chemistry World* magazine

ONLINE

Online publishers are inundated with young people who want to work in the medium. They can get all the work experience candidates they need, many who are graduates with journalistic qualifications. If they take on a paid trainee, they'll choose from the best of those who have worked for them.

Because online staffs are small, and the medium requires a good deal of technical input – and mastery of a wide range of skills that stem from both print media and broadcasting – your training will inevitably cover a wide range of tasks. Employers are looking for technical skills far more than journalistic ones.

This means that, for a journalist, training online may not be a good idea. As with broadcasting, it makes sense for an aspiring reporter or feature writer to train on a newspaper or magazine, where they can concentrate on getting the words right.

Most print publications have an allied website, and if your ambitions lie online, it can be a good idea to train on the main publication and elect at some point to get some online experience. If you go into online with no journalistic experience, and hope to become a reporter or feature writer, you may find the odds stacked against you.

If you do start out online, expect to begin as a general dogsbody, doing basic html, using content management systems, sourcing photographs, liaising with content providers and generally helping out. Often, only minimal copy is originated by the online team, so the opportunities to write stories or create other original editorial content will be limited.

“I was really proud of organising a text message poetry competition that attracted thousands of entries, mainly from people who had never written a poem in their lives.”

Vic Keegan, columnist, *The Guardian*

What material is generated will be in a form appropriate to the web. So you might spend a day building up a slide show of celebrities on a particular theme – such as ‘Bad hair day’ or ‘Awful Oscar frocks’, and writing a witty caption to accompany each.

Your website is likely to have commercial partners. The deal with them is likely to be that they provide content in some form, and you place banner ads on the relevant pages encouraging readers either to go to the partner's own website or to enter into e-commerce with them.

This blurring of the line in traditional media between editorial and advertising is something you need to be comfortable with if you are to work online happily.

However, online can be a great environment for those who wish to develop many skills and who are frustrated by the restrictions of traditional media. What you can achieve online is only limited by your inventiveness and imagination.

TV AND RADIO

As a trainee in broadcast journalism, you will be learning about news reporting, law and how government works, just as a newspaper trainee does. However, your job is complicated in that you are not just a reporter – though you need to be very good one to get on. You are also an editor of your packages and a performer of your piece.

You will find yourself doing a wide range of tasks as a trainee, from answering the phones during a phone-in and monitoring email messages to a programme to assisting senior reporters on stories. They might have you fixing interviews for them, or conducting short interviews which they do not have time for, and which they will feed into their package.

You will often shadow a range of more senior journalists – from general reporters to specialists. You will see how they go about their work, how they conduct interviews, how they use charm, tenacity or sheer bloody-mindedness to get to the people they need to interview, and to get them to address the questions they need answers to.

From them, and from the assignments you undertake on your own, you'll learn how to report, interview and structure a piece. You'll also learn how (in radio) to get the sound effects you need to bring a package to life and (on TV) how to write to the best available pictures, so your words and the pictures combine to tell the story really effectively.

You will also be trained in presentation and in making the best of your voice.

“The best things about the BBC's journalists training scheme were the excellent lectures and hands-on experience; the worst was persuading a traditional northern news editor that a southern graduate with no newspaper experience was any use to him.”

Joshua Rosenberg, legal commentator



PHOTOGRAPHY

As a trainee photographer on a national newspaper, you will be treated just like any other casual in on a day shift. You will be expected to do the round of half a dozen jobs in a day, perhaps more. You'll need to drive yourself to the location, get the picture, transmit it electronically back to the office and move on swiftly to the next job.

A typical day might see you photographing a company chairman announcing his annual results, politicians on a photo-op, defendants arriving at or leaving court, and someone who is the subject of a feature.

You might have to take byline pictures of staffers and stock pictures for the library – everything from estate agents' boards to traffic jams.

You might have to do a doorstep – waiting in the cold and rain for someone you are interested in to dash from house to car.

SPORT

Even if you are lucky enough to be taken on specifically as a trainee sports journalist, you will still need to master the principles of good reporting. Just as in any other field, you need to learn to write a story effectively, to interview and quote accurately – so shorthand is very useful – and to know about the law.

You will learn how essential it is to have a comprehensive network of contacts. Because so many stories you will cover in sport are off-diary, you will only get them if key players, managers and support staff are prepared to talk to you. If you lack contacts, you won't get the stories your rivals are running.

A passion for sport will probably be taken for granted, but you will need to spend every spare moment watching and reading about the sports you cover, so you are up to speed.

“Young journalists get noticed by breaking stories, not writing 400 words on a football match.”
James Toney, managing editor Sportsbeat/News Associates news agency

You'll need to know as much as any news reporter about the law, and of the Press Complaints Commission's code of conduct on privacy – which sets out when and where you can and cannot photograph someone.

On a local paper you will be doing the rounds of golden weddings and flower shows, with the disadvantage that – unlike the reporter who can get what he needs on the phone – you have to turn up to each and every little job. You'll need to like people and be able to charm them into allowing you to take a good picture.

If you are taken on by a large sports agency, you can expect – after proving yourself – to be part of the team attending major events such as the Olympics, tennis and football tournaments and so on. There will also be much routine match-reporting. Many games have to be covered, even if very few outlets will run much more than the result.

If you are working on a sports website, you will be doing a great deal of routine desk work. As websites originate much less material than newspapers or sports broadcasters, you will mainly be taking submitted material and putting it online. To do this you will need to know basic Content Management Systems, and perhaps also video-editing. You might find yourself writing a minute by minute commentary on a game, typing a sentence about almost every move so that the online reader gets a steadily updated account of the flow of the game.

CAREER PATHS

INTRODUCTION

There are almost as many journalistic careers paths as there are journalists.

Some of the key determinants of a career path are these:

- Which medium you want to progress in – news papers, magazines, TV, radio or online
- Whether you want to remain a reporter, feature writer or photographer or move up the management chain.

If you wish to remain a reporter you may want, depending on the medium you have chosen, to move to a daily paper from a weekly, or to a national from a provincial.

If you are a TV reporter you may want to move from a provincial station to a national one.

If you choose the management chain you may decide to become a sub-editor, with the intention of moving on up the subbing and production chain and hopefully becoming an editor one day. It is important to understand however, that many newspapers now expect reporters to write copy straight on to a page template, a trend which threatens the traditional role of the sub-editor.

You may, on the other hand, want to hone one particular skill and apply it across media – you might be a TV news correspondent as your main job, but also have a newspaper column and host a regular chat online.

One thing to remember is that journalism is an unpredictable profession. Things can change fast. A new editor can radically alter a publication or a programme, and your face may no longer fit.

“Every job I have had, apart from the first, was offered to me by people I had worked with previously.”
Sue Ryan, former managing editor, *Daily Telegraph*

“In this business career paths have many twists and turns. I always have the feeling that the best is yet to come.”
Elena Curti, deputy editor, *The Tablet*

Some people are focused and single-minded. They know that what they want to be is, for example, political editor of *The Times* or football correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* and they pursue their goal doggedly, not being deflected by interesting and lucrative offers which would take them away from their goal. But it can be hard to do this.

If you are talented and doing a good job, editors who have more senior vacancies to fill are likely to ask you to step into them. If you say no, it can count against you. If you get one chance and you turn it down, an editor is not going to quickly offer you another one.

So some career paths show odd turns, jumps and leaps, as you will see if you read through the testimonials from practising journalists in this brochure.

Perhaps the editor wants you to do something but you hate it, or are lousy at it. There is a falling out. You have to move on, and in doing so, take the best available option.

Some journalists get to the top in one branch and then decide they would be happier in a less pressured job. Or they decide they've had long enough on the desk and want to get out reporting again.

Journalists are very flexible – they have to survive. They are tolerant of change, and understanding of career patterns which may involve some unusual changes of direction. If things do not work out the way you hoped in one job – and you are respected – you should have little problem landing another one that hopefully suits you better.

NEWSPAPER OR MAGAZINE REPORTING

You may decide that reporting is what you love, and that newspapers or magazines are the place to do it.

Reporting is a highly portable skill. Whether you decide to stay in the medium you began in, or move to any of the others, your reporting skills will stand you in good stead.

But let's assume, for the purposes of this section, that you want to stay in the medium you are used to. One career path open to you, if you began on a regional newspaper or trade magazine, is to remain where you are, perhaps becoming chief reporter or a specialist writer of some kind.

Or you may decide to move to a bigger outlet – either a daily or national newspaper, or a major consumer magazine. In these bigger ponds with their substantial news operations, you will have many more opportunities to progress as a reporter.

Most reporters decide to specialise. It means they cover a patch in depth, and that they are pulled off the main diary where they can be called upon to chase any story that presents itself.



Photograph: Press Association Training

Specialist reporters are often called correspondents, and cover everything from aspects of the domestic scene, such as politics, business or the arts, to regions of the country (north of England correspondent, Northern Ireland correspondent). There are foreign correspondents too.

In the key locations – New York, Washington, Brussels – it is likely they will be staff. In less newsy places, correspondents are often freelance, and will probably combine broadcasting outlets with newspaper reporting and writing magazine articles.

You may find you are able to remain on one newspaper your entire career, moving to new reporting briefs every few years, or you may find you change papers often.

“My first job was as a reporter for the *Western Morning News*, Plymouth. I was made London editor of the *Western Morning News* (based in the House of Commons) after one year. I went to *Sunday Business* as political editor 18 months later. Three years later I was recruited by the *Sunday Times* to work on the business section. A year later I was appointed deputy political editor.”
Andrew Porter, political editor, *The Daily Telegraph*

“I joined *The Guardian* in Manchester from university. I went gradually from general reporter to regional reporter then the city office in London and afterwards the main.”
Vic Keegan, columnist, *The Guardian*

NEWSPAPER OR MAGAZINE PRODUCTION

Formal training on newspapers and magazines is almost exclusively about developing your abilities as a writer. But many people find they have an aptitude for production.

The first step on the production ladder is to become a sub-editor. That means you take a writer's copy and ready it for publication. You check it for accuracy, grammar, spelling, legality and other questions of fact. You tighten the writing and cut it to fit the space it has been allocated on the page. You also often write the headline, and other 'sells' including strap lines, standfirsts and picture captions.

A sub-editor who wants to progress in production will look for an opening as a chief or deputy chief sub. In this role, you oversee the work of the subs. You assign material to them and ensure that it is handled effectively. You also liaise with the departments that originate the copy, design the pages and supply the pictures.

Although sub-editors positions can still be found working in newspaper and magazine production, it is worth noting that more reporters are being asked to write straight on to a page template. This process removes the need for a sub-editor and it is a gathering trend in news production.

The next step is to become production editor. In this role you have overall responsibility for the creation, on time, of the newspaper or magazine. It is up to you to liaise with departments including advertising, to oversee the collation and distribution of flat plans for those who need to follow them. You will liaise with the printers and the repro house, if your publication uses one.

On national newspapers, and big regional newspapers, there may be something called the back bench – the team which oversees the production of the newspaper. The production editor will probably sit at the back bench which is usually run by the night editor. As editors tend to go home at 7pm or 8pm, they need someone to hand over to. Usually, the editor will make sure he is happy with the first edition and then leave any later changes necessitated by breaking or developing stories to the night editor. Once the editor leaves the building the night editor is in charge.

Often, night editors have come up the subbing route, because they need a firm grasp of production to do their jobs effectively. Because most of the paper has already been created, theirs is seen as a largely administrative role. The editor creates the newspaper he wants, then leaves. The night editor makes sure he gets what he has asked for, and takes account of any changes it is necessary to make to bring the paper as up to the minute as is possible. It is rare for a night editor to become editor.

One other possible course allied to production is design. On magazines, designers will almost always have an art college background. In newspapers that was not traditionally the case, largely because newspaper design values were much lower than those of magazines. Today that is changing, and many more art college graduates are employed to design pages.

However, plenty of journalists with an aptitude for design and layout become designers.

FEATURES ON NEWSPAPERS AND IN MAGAZINES

The feature writer may have started as a news reporter, which is an excellent grounding because any writer will benefit from having those basic skills. They may have started as a freelance, successfully offering items to one or more paper or magazine, and finding they can make a living at it.

They may also have started as a secretary on a magazine, or a fashion assistant, and convinced their bosses that they deserved a chance to try their hand at writing – and impressed them.

Feature writing suits those who want to focus on the how and why of things – not just the fact that they have happened. Feature writers are interested in personalities and in getting behind the news. They write creatively, adding a strong individual style to the basics of good writing that they will have learned if they started out as a news reporter.

Feature writers often choose to specialise in a particular field, at which they can gain expertise and a good reputation.

They might go in for travel writing, interviews, movie reviewing, writing a first-person column, or any of dozens of other specialisms.

The career path for a feature writer will be very individual, reflecting their particular skills and interests. However, successful feature writers do have some moves in common. Often they will start out at less prestigious publications and move on to better – and better paying – ones.

A good interviewer may find their talents in demand at more than one newspaper.

Really good columnists can spur many readers into buying the magazine or newspaper regularly, and a proportion of them will follow a writer they really like to whatever publication they move to.

A feature writer may also develop an interest in going up the management chain. The first move is likely to be becoming features editor. On a magazine particularly, they may be in line for an editorship.

“I went straight into doing major interviews of up to 2,000 words without ever having covered a flower show... I became features editor of *Beat Instrumental* in 1971 after having interviewed Marc Bolan and Rod Stewart.”

Steve Turner, freelance music journalist and author

“After two years as a staff writer on *Sounds* magazine, I was appointed features editor of an offshoot magazine called *Noise!*, which sadly only lasted six months. After that I moved to another music magazine, *Record Mirror*, as assistant editor, moved my way up to deputy editor and was appointed editor in 1986.”

Beverley Glick, commissioning editor, *The Sunday Express*

“I’d been sports editor for 13 years and said to Simon Kelner, the editor, that I fancied a change. A fortnight later he offered me the job of chief sports feature writer.”

Paul Newman, chief sports feature writer, *The Independent*

TV OR RADIO REPORTING

If you want to progress as a reporter in TV and radio, you need to aim to join a major broadcaster, and to become a correspondent. Correspondents cover everything from aspects of the domestic scene; business, show business, politics; to regions of the country; north of England correspondent, Northern Ireland correspondent. Foreign correspondents can be based in any part of the world.

In the key locations, such as New York, Washington and Brussels, it is likely you will be on the staff. In less newsy places, correspondents are often freelance, and will probably combine broadcasting outlets with newspaper reporting and writing magazine articles.

If you remain in broadcasting, you might go into management and become a producer. This is a desk job, and you work with a reporter or number of reporters to ensure the package they produce has all the required elements and is created on time and in a style to suit the programme it is intended for. From here you might become an editor of a bulletin or a programme. You’ll be deciding what to cover, how, and who to assign to the story. To your reporting and broadcasting skills you will need to add good organisational skills, leadership and a sense of how each segment or package fits into the whole of the bulletin or programme.

From here you might become a series editor or executive editor, at which point you’ll be dealing with policy and budgets as you will with news.

“When Channel Four News began no one thought it would last so those of us brave enough to join got ahead quickly – at 27 I was sent to Washington as the programme’s first correspondent there.”
Edward Stourton, presenter, Radio 4 Today programme



TV OR RADIO TV PRODUCTION

As a journalist in TV or radio, you may decide to remain in an on-air role. If so you will perhaps move on to become a specialist reporter. At the BBC, where many radio journalists are employed, the advent of multimedia, where reporters work for both TV, radio and online, has opened up opportunities for moving into specialisms and reporting on both.

You might, however, decide to move up the management chain.

The path up the off-air side of a broadcaster is through production. In rising seniority the titles are: researcher, assistant producer and producer. These people do not appear on air, but are responsible for supporting reporters, identifying and researching

“I got a job in BBC local radio and went from there to national radio. After eight years as a radio journalist I went freelance. I had a young family by then and my last radio job had been as a political correspondent for Independent Radio News at Westminster. I found the hours punishing and was looking for a better balance between work and looking after my children. That proved difficult to achieve. I switched to production and was involved in producing television and radio news and current affairs programmes. I was a producer on Kilroy for three years. Later I had a series of short-term contracts with periods of intense activity and no work at all. Most of the work was absorbing but the stop-start nature of it became wearing.”

Elena Curti, executive editor, *The Tablet*

“The BBC trained me to direct the studio but I didn't receive any journalistic training at all. I nearly drowned as a result.”

Roger Bolton, programme maker and radio presenter

stories, helping pull packages together and making sure the programme is complete, balanced and runs to time. Depending on the programme, the producer may write the script for the presenter or news reader.

If you joined broadcasting from another medium as a reporter, and move across at that level, you are likely to enter off-air work as a producer. From there, you might aim to become editor of a news bulletin or other factual programme. There are big jobs such as head of news after that if you are keen enough.

NEWS AGENCIES

Major news agencies can offer great scope for you to develop your career. If you remain in reporting, you have the option, as you would on a newspaper, magazine or with a broadcaster, of moving into a specialism. That involves focusing on one area of coverage, which can be anything from politics to crime, health to science.

If you choose the management path you will join the editing team. You might become in turn assistant, deputy and then overall news editor, or foreign editor, or business editor.

In these editing roles you will be part of the team that directs the agency's output, deciding which stories are covered and by whom. You may have an international network of reporters, and a wealth of specialists.

“Experience is everything. Get formal qualifications but also get out and do as much as you can for newspapers/agencies and get some behind you.”

James Toney, managing editor, Sportsbeat/News Associates agency

Whether you take the reporting or the editing path, your skills are highly relevant to other media – including newspapers and broadcasters.

At a small agency, you might become chief reporter and enjoy covering all the major stories that develop in your patch or in the field you cover. If you move into management you will be directing the reporting team, and making sure your clients get the stories they need.



ONLINE

Online news is a young medium, without the ranks of senior journalists who stand between newcomers and the top jobs in traditional media; so opportunities are there to move on fast.

However, if you want to progress as a writer, opportunities are limited online. Most writing specialisms are better catered for in traditional media.

But you can move forward in production. You might be happy with this career path if you enjoy both writing and subbing. At ISPs, the progression up the journalistic career ladder involves taking editorial control of increasingly large areas of content. You might be called a producer rather than an editor, but your job will be to determine the content of a channel, or part of a channel. Often that will involve re-purposing material from a content-provider, which might be another company within the overall group, or a commercial partner.

For instance, you might take pop videos from an associated record company, movie trailers from a film company, material for your homes channel from a DIY chain and for your women's channel from a magazine that has an associated website.

Your job will be to ensure the smooth transfer of this material from a partner to your website.

As you progress up the online ladder, you will probably take umbrella control for a range of channels. Your role, as you progress, will change from one of processing material to a more strategic one of seeking out partners who can provide content, and of keeping those partners happy.

In traditional media, there is a firm distinction between the commercial side of the company and its journalists. Editors guard their independence jealously, and refuse to be swayed by the desires or demands of advertisers. Online, there is often no real distinction between editorial content and advertising. Advertisers are often partners in the production of editorial.

On newspaper or magazine-related websites, there can be good opportunities to move from online to offline and back again, perhaps in the specialism you are pursuing, or as you progress up the editorial management ladder.

The editor of a newspaper's website is likely to have a senior role and a title which puts him or her on a par with the heads of other key sections – news, sport and so on.



“The editor asked me to become online editor of *The Guardian* after failing to find the right candidate elsewhere.”

Vic Keegan, columnist, *The Guardian*

SPORT

In sport, you have two main career paths.

One is to remain reporting or writing, but move onto more prestigious publications or broadcasting outlets, and perhaps develop a specialism. You might become football correspondent or chief sports reporter.

In broadcasting, sports news is semi-detached from sports commentating. As a journalist, it is the news route you are most likely to be interested in taking.

You might go in to production, in which case, depending on your chosen medium, you might become a newspaper sports sub-editor, with the intention of becoming sports editor one day. On TV or radio you might become a sports producer, with the intention of becoming the editor of a sports programme in the future. Unless you are working on, say, a dedicated satellite sports news channel, you are likely to be moving away from news if you do this.

Sport is a specialism that can take you across media with comparative ease.

It's not a big step from writing a live match report to picking up a phone and talking about the game for 90 seconds on radio, for example. A good knowledge of sports and sporting stars is a very portable asset, and will be equally valuable in any medium – from newspapers and magazines to TV, radio and online.

A TV sports commentator might also have a column in a newspaper.

There are good opportunities for freelancers. One major British sports news agency runs a network of 300 football correspondents and serves local and national newspapers, websites and many other outlets.

“While I was working at the *Barnet Press* I did shifts for a number of national papers and was eventually offered a job as a sub on the sports desk at *The Times*. I was there for nine years and was assistant sports editor when I left. I joined *The Independent* as deputy sports editor in 1990 and was made sports editor a year later. I was sports editor for 13 years.”

Paul Newman, chief sports feature writer, *The Independent*

“Nothing beats breaking a story. I'm particularly proud of being the first journalist to reveal the story that Wembley's Twin Towers were going to be demolished. And I'm also proud of a series of stories revealing the extent of sports doping in East Germany.”

James Toney, managing editor Sportsbeat/News Associates agency

PHOTOGRAPHY

If you want to stay taking pictures, you may want to move to a more prestigious publication.

A practiced route is from local newspapers to the nationals. You may have impressed a national picture desk with work you have done on their behalf, or which you or your newspaper has sold to them.

The reality is that to do so, you will probably have to go freelance because there are very few staff jobs these days. With so many extremely good freelance photographers clamouring for shifts and assignments, there is simply no need to employ staffers.

You might develop a specialism; perhaps fashion, portraits or sport. With a specialism, you may be able to command a higher price for your work.

You may become considered the best in your field – whether it's golf or what is euphemistically known as glamour photography. Editors who want nothing but the best will pay you handsomely. After all, you get star photographers, just as you get star interviewers or columnists.

It can be possible to get lucrative corporate work on the back of your editorial reputation. This can pay very well and sometimes subsidises the editorial assignments you need to maintain your reputation and keep your name in the public eye.



You may want to work a geographic patch but open up more outlets for your work, either by simply going freelance and working from home or working for or setting up a local photo agency and serving a mix of newspapers and magazines.

If you want to move up the management chain, that will mean moving on to the picture desk, perhaps as deputy picture editor initially, or possibly going straight in as picture editor.

On the desk you will have a mix of former photographers and those who have never taken pictures professionally. These picture desk assistants are often former secretaries who have taken on extra responsibility and learned about picture desk administration. You'll need to inspire, nurture and manage this team, as well as your photographers.

Your abilities and experience as a photographer will recommend you for the top job, but even if the boss doesn't realise it, there is a huge amount of administration involved. Photographers are often used to working alone and pleasing themselves. Becoming a picture editor can be a culture shock as they have dozens of people relying on them, and they have to come up with the goods at exactly the right time.

FREELANCING

Freelancing is something many journalists turn to at some time in their careers.

For some, it's the way in; for others it's a way of developing their career, of jumping to the next level at certain key points. For others it comes about because of redundancy or a falling out with an employer, or for yet more, it's a way of life that suits their approach to work.

Some senior journalists, who have a wealth of experience behind them, find they can sell themselves as consultants, called in when a publication needs fundamental re-directing, or when a publisher has a project that needs editorial development.

It is very hard to start your career as a freelance in any branch of journalism where you need well-developed skills – such as news reporting or sub-editing. Those who manage to start their career as freelancers are much more likely to do so as feature writers of some description.

They may have a knack for a certain type of article. Perhaps they send in reviews which are accepted, the section editor likes them and gives the freelance more work. They go on from there, becoming regular, well-established contributors. Many a big-name columnist has started this way.

For others, freelancing can be a way of developing their career. The classic route to Fleet Street for newspaper journalists is to start doing shifts at a national while still working on regional papers. There is a ready market for both reporters and sub-editors on the nationals. Photographers may find it harder, because there are so many chasing each shift, but it can be done.

If such shifts go well, they may be offered a regular contract, or summer relief. If they are really lucky, they'll be offered a staff job. However, it's most likely that, to be taken seriously by the paper or magazine you want to work on full time, you will need to go freelance and make yourself readily available to them. You want to be the first person they call when a shift or an assignment comes up.

Once you have the skills and experience to be able to get shifts, you may find you prefer to be freelance. Doing shifts, you may have more freedom than a staffer, and enjoy working on several

publications each week. Feature writers, who may have a contract to write a column each week, or a certain number of features in a year, are often freelance.

Freelancing is also common in broadcasting. The advent of a forest of independent production companies has meant that the old, established career structure has been fractured. Many broadcasters have set up their own production companies, or now offer their services to these independents.

Another way of thriving as a freelance is to become an expert in some key area which is regularly in the news but which is too specialised for most publications to employ a staffer. You might know everything about budget airlines, for example, and write about them for a range of newspapers, magazines and websites. You might find you can get a book commissioned on the subject, and then you will find that TV and radio regularly ask you to appear.

If freelancing is thrust upon you, you need to fall back on your resources. This is where having NCTJ training can stand you in good stead. Perhaps for the first time in years, people want to see your CV, and to ensure that you know what you are doing.

At such times, journalists often have to take one or more steps down the ladder. News editors may find themselves doing reporting shifts, features editors doing down-table subbing. Even those who reach the very top, and become editors, can find it necessary to go freelance. There are few editors who retire in the top job. Often they go on to sell their skills, acting as consultants to publishers who need really high-level know-how – but only while they launch a publication, or find a new direction for an ailing one. Working out what you would do if you ever had to become freelance is a very useful exercise for any journalist.

"I started out with freelance writing on rock music for the NME. I sent in speculative reviews, which were published – and paid for."

Bill Mann, Weekend editor, *The Guardian*

"Take advantage of every opportunity to study. Try to get to know at least one subject in depth which could be used if you ever turn freelance. Being too much of a generalist when freelance is a disadvantage."

Steve Turner, freelance journalist and author

CROSS MEDIA CAREER PATHS

MOVING TO A NEW MEDIUM

There is a general suspicion of journalists from another medium. They are far more aware of the differences between rival media than they are in the similarities.

Newspaper people will suspect magazine-trained journalists of being lightweights, who don't understand hard news and can't hit a deadline unless it's at least three weeks away.

Broadcasters suspect that print journalists will be far too wordy – and worthy – and won't understand how to tell a story with pictures and sounds.

Online journalists know they have a handle on the future, and can resent people from old media and their plodding ways and insistence on demarcation between, for example, those who write text and those who edit video.

In fact, journalists in any one branch of the media have key skills which they can transfer to any other medium if they are open minded enough to have a go, and if employers are enlightened enough to let them.

There is nothing to say that a newspaper trained writer, sub-editor or section head can't work very well in magazines, for example. Or that someone who speaks well on TV or radio can't write a newspaper column.

In the pages on career paths we have indicated some key areas where a journalist can jump media. Nevertheless, prejudices do exist, and they can make it hard for journalists to move between media.

The following pages are about some of the cross media career paths that have been shown to work. But don't be restricted by them. If you have the talent, you can take your journalistic skills anywhere you like

Here are some wild card career moves that have worked:

- From newspaper editor to TV presenter
- From TV programme maker to radio presenter
- From newspaper editor to newsreader
- From magazine editor to sports writer
- From sports reporter to online channel producer
- From TV producer to magazine editor
- From website editor to magazine editor
- From news editor to news agency editor in chief

REPORTING

Reporting is a highly transferable skill. Reporting skills are the same in whichever medium they are practiced. What differs is the format in which you express your message.

On a newspaper, your key method of expression is clearly through words. In an illustrated magazine, pictures may tell a large part of the story. On radio, you use spoken word and sound, on TV spoken word and moving pictures. Online you can use any of the above, in whatever combination suits your format, your story, and your audience.

Here are some key cross media moves reporters have made:

- Newspaper and press agency reporters move to TV and radio
- Magazine reporters move to newspapers, TV and radio
- Newspaper reporters move to online
- TV and radio reporters move to online
- Online reporters move to newspapers, magazines, TV and radio

SUBBING AND PRODUCTION

Subbing and production are needed in every media. The skills involved are always the same, though their practice is adjusted depending on the format in which the story is being presented.

In every medium, written text must be checked and corrected. It is necessary in all media (other than radio) to ensure words and pictures match up. In every medium, it is important that a story is organised logically, fits the space or time allotted to it and that it does not contain serious errors.

Here are some tried and tested cross-media career paths in sub-editing and production:

- From newspaper sub to magazine sub
- From newspaper sub to online channel producer
- From newspaper sub to TV and radio bulletin compiler
- From TV producer to newspaper sub-editor
- From magazine chief sub to newspaper chief sub
- From radio producer to online bulletin editor
- From newspaper production editor to magazine production editor

EDITING

Good editing involves the selection of material which a particular audience finds interesting, and managing a team which can work together to create, gather and present that material to a consistently high standard. A good editor can work in any medium.

Here are some cross media career paths that editors have followed:

- Newspaper editor to magazine editor
- Magazine editor to newspaper editor
- Newspaper or magazine editor to website editor
- Website editor to TV or radio editor
- TV or radio editor to website editor
- Newspaper editor to TV programme editor

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Banner ads – the majority of advertisements which appear on websites are banner ads. They are a standard size and so can be slotted into standard-sized spaces built in to any website. Adverts online are usually clickable, which means the surfer can click on them with the cursor, and bring up further information.

Bi-media – the practice, especially at the BBC, of requiring reporters and specialists to report on both radio and TV. Previously, staffs on radio and TV would mirror each other.

Block release – the practice of allowing trainees to attend college for periods in order to gain their qualifications in government, law and shorthand. (See the Courses section of this brochure for full details of different training arrangements.)

Byline – the author's name on a published article.

Channel – on a website, a section covering a particular subject. So named to indicate online journalism's affinity with broadcast media.

Consumer titles – magazines which are directed at the general reader, and sold on newsstands and through subscription as opposed to trade titles, aimed at a particular trade, business or profession and often only sold via subscription and other non-newsstand methods.

Contacts book – an address book containing the details of people who a journalist has spoken to in the past and who may help in the future. Every journalist should have a comprehensive contacts book.

Content providers – organisations which provide material which is published on a website. Providers can range from news agencies, who supply headlines and other information for a fee, and commercial partners who may supply content for free as part of a commercial contract. For example, a company such as B&Q may provide the editorial content on a website's DIY channel, in return for banner advertising and other links through to its own website, where readers are able to spend their money.

Credit – an acknowledgement, in print or on air, of the source of a piece of information. Often to a news agency (eg: Reuters).

Cuttings – copies of stories a newspaper or magazine journalist has had published. In a cuttings portfolio they can be used to give a representative sample of a person's best work.

Distance learning – studying through a correspondence course, rather than attending a college or university. (See the courses section of the website www.nctj.com for a full run-down on how you can study with the NCTJ.)

Down-table – on a subs desk, there has traditionally been one end where the chief sub and his or her deputy sits. Close to them sit the senior subs. More junior subs, and freelancers, will sit at the far end. Today the rigid seating structure is often not maintained, but there is still a distinction between up and down-table subs. Every young sub's ambition is to move up the table.

Fleet Street – once, almost all national newspapers had offices in London's Fleet Street, or in the narrow streets leading off it. Although in the 1980s and 90s newspapers relocated to Canary Wharf, Kensington, Wapping and various other locations, the nationals are still known as Fleet Street.

Forums – online debating chambers. Some are monitored, which means a person reads comments submitted for posting on the site. Others are not, which means anything submitted immediately appears on screen.

html – stands for hypertext mark-up language, the code which is added to text in order for it to appear as intended on a website with, among other things, the correct type styles and sizes. html is the electronic equivalent of the old pencilled instructions to printers which sub-editors put on copy in the days when type had to be set in metal to create a page which could be printed.

Indentured trainee – in journalism, a young apprenticed person who agrees to work for a company for a set period, often between 18 months and two years – in return for receiving on-the-job training and instruction in government, law and shorthand. (See the courses section of the website www.nctj.com for full details of the different ways a journalist can train.)

ISPs – internet service providers. To go online you need a contract with a company that will allow you access to the internet. Companies such as Sky, AOL and Tiscali charge a monthly fee to provide this access.

Off-diary – if a story is known about in advance, such as a court appearance or an annual general meeting, it can be added to a forward planning diary, so that a publication, broadcaster or website can make sure it is covered. An off-diary story is something that cannot be predicted. One benchmark by which reporters are measured is how many off-diary stories they bring in. Ideally, such stories should be exclusive – things which no-one else knows about. By running as many exclusives as possible, a news operation hopes to show that it offers a uniquely informative service.

Packages – on TV and radio, news and feature items may – if time allows – be enhanced with interviews, case studies and appropriate pictures (on TV) and sounds (on radio). Bringing all these elements and crafting them into a report is known as developing a package.

PA – the Press Association, a British-based news agency which supplies reports to a wide range of newspapers, magazines, TV radio and online customers.

PDA – or a palm top: a small computer (personal digital assistant).

Photoshop – a computer software programme which enables the manipulation of pictures and other graphical elements.

Photo-op – a pre-arranged opportunity for a famous or otherwise newsworthy person, or an event, to be photographed.

Postgraduates – in journalistic terms, those who have completed degrees, which may or may not be in journalism, or who have gone on to obtain a postgraduate qualification in journalism prior to entering the profession.

Pre-entry qualification – the NCTJ exams taken by a new journalist after completing a course, before getting a job in the industry.

Production editor – a person who is responsible for the collation of a publication ready for printing. He or she must see that all pages are ready on time, and are supplied to the printer in a state that means they can be printed. He or she also liaises with printers to ensure that the publication is printed at the required standard and in the agreed time frame.

Repro house – a company (or department within a large publisher's operation) to which pages are sent and made ready for printing.

Slide show – one of the methods of telling a picture-led story effectively online is to create a series of screens, with typically one picture and a caption on each. To move from one to the next chronologically, a reader clicks on a link at the bottom of each page.

Style – the rules and conventions a publication has put in place which should be followed when copy is subbed and presented in the publication. It will cover alternative spellings, rules on when to use initial capital letters, how to present dates and figures, and many other rules. Several publications – including *The Guardian*, *The Economist* and *The Times*, have either published their style guides or make them available on their websites. On publications which do not have their own style guides, the Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors is often followed.

Subbing – the checking of stories for accuracy, spelling, grammar, sense and legality before publication. Sub-editors also cut stories to fit an allotted space, and write headlines, captions and any other items designed to enhance the display of the material.

Sub-editor – the experts who do the subbing, which involves taking material and preparing it for publication. Sub-editors check for accuracy, spelling, grammar, sense and legality. They cut material to fit an allotted space, and write headlines, captions and any other items designed to enhance the display of the material.

Trade titles – magazines aimed at the members of a trade, profession or craft. Often sold through subscription, or given to members of a professional organisation, rather than being available at newsstands.



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