

Behind the Headlines

News and media teaching ideas

Reading and interpreting news

Is everything you hear true?

The amount of disinformation being spread, particularly online, can be a big concern for teachers and students. Open up discussions with students about the news sources they use (TV, family and friends, social media, etc) and the comparable trustworthiness of these sources. Do some of these sources have more bias than others, and do some require further research to verify the stories on?

Talk with students about how they might go about verifying a news story they hear. Websites such as [Snopes](#), [Full Fact](#), and [BBC Verify](#) can be useful.



Familiarity with newspapers and news stories

Have a look at the different sections of a newspaper, eg [front pages](#), [UK](#), [World](#), [Sport](#). Choose favourite stories, headlines and pictures and have students explain why they've chosen them. You can also use our [news terminology fact sheet](#) to identify other parts of the newspaper.

Read a selection of newspapers and news websites or watch a news programme. Talk about which stories are the most important or interesting, the order in which they appear and how they are presented. Consider the types of choices editors need to make and ask students if they'd make the same choices.

Front page activities

Read and compare the layout and content of the front pages of several different newspapers. Discuss why the newspapers have chosen these stories to go on the front of the paper. Look at the different strategies newspapers use to grab the reader's attention. Our [news terminology fact sheet](#) and annotated front pages (updated regularly on our [downloadable resources page](#)) help students to identify different elements of front pages. Use these [Guardian galleries](#) to analyse front pages from a range of publications about important news events.



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Writing and producing newspapers

Structure of a news report

Reporters must have as much information as possible about their story. They verify all the facts by doing detailed research using a range of trusted sources. Once they have enough information about a subject, they start to plan a news report.

Discuss the inverted pyramid structure of news stories and the key opening paragraph including the 5Ws of journalism (who, what, where, when, why).

- Give students an article without the first paragraph and get them to write the opening.
- Write the main body of a news report using the inverted pyramid structure.

See our [news writing](#) advice sheet for more on the structure of news reports.

Structure of a news story



Subediting

Subediting is the process of checking over and cutting down a story so that it is ready to publish. Practise cutting down news stories to a set number of paragraphs or words, ensuring that the key elements of the story remain. Look for redundant words. Subedit articles containing deliberate mistakes: eg spelling, grammar, punctuation, capital letters, homophones, typos, factual errors.

Headlines

Compare a range of headlines from different newspapers and websites and discuss why they work. Look at active verbs in headlines and how this makes them effective. See how many of the 5Ws concise headlines contain. Identify different language techniques such as alliteration, puns and rhyme and why they may be used in certain types of stories and not others. Write headlines for stories before seeing what news organisations have used, then compare results.

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Pictures

Discuss how pictures support news stories and what makes a picture more powerful or effective. Analyse a selection of images on the same subject from different newspapers and websites and discuss the impact that each has on the story. Look at how pictures work with headlines to encourage people to read the story.

Give students pictures without stories or headlines and see if they can work out what the story is about. The [Guardian pictures page](#) has examples of interesting news-related images chosen by our picture editors. The [Best photographs of the day](#) offers a variety of images that can be used as a starting point for debate or discussions about picture choices.

This [worksheet](#) gives young people a chance to decide how effective a set of pictures are for a news report.

