

NAMPA EDITORIAL GUIDE AND STYLE BOOK



NAMIBIA
PRESS
AGENCY

NAMPA EDITORIAL GUIDE AND STYLE BOOK



**NAMIBIA
PRESS
AGENCY**

Compiled by NAMPA Editorial Division and
approved by NAMPA Management in 2015
Printed by John Meinert Printing





Table of Contents

Page

PART I – NAMPA WRITING STYLE

1

1.	Introduction	1
2.	The Objectives of NAMPA	1
3.	Newsroom Language	2
4.	Basic Guidelines	4
5.	Sources	6
6.	Speed and Accuracy	6
7.	Deadline	7
8.	Gathering Colour	7
9.	Dress Sense	7
10.	Structure of a News Story	8
10.1	Characteristics of a news agency story	8
10.1.1	Slug	8
10.1.2	Master Slug	8
10.1.3	Headline	9
10.1.4	Byline	9
10.1.5	Dateline	9
10.2	Format of the NAMPA story	10
10.2.1	The opening paragraph	11
10.2.2	Lead	13
10.2.3	Body	14
10.2.4	Conclusion	14
11.	Feature Articles	14
11.1	What is a Feature?	15
11.2	Interviewing Subjects	16
11.3	Preparing to Write a Feature	16
11.4	Writing the Feature	17
11.5	Finalising the Article	17

12.	Photography - Writing Captions	18
13.	Follow-ups	19
14.	Reader's Interest	21
15.	Quotations	22
16.	Punctuation	22
17.	Acronyms and Abbreviations	23
18.	Numbers, Percentages and Fractions	23
19.	Time	24
20.	Currencies	25
21.	Corrections	26
22.	Killing Copy	26
23.	Embargoed Copy	27
24.	When to use Caps	27
25.	Speeches read on someone's behalf	28

PART II – BEING A NAMPA JOURNALIST **28**

1.	The Anatomy of News Gathering	28
2.	Media Briefing Sessions	31
3.	Media Conferences and One-on-One Interviews	31
4.	Handling Media Releases	32
5.	Advertising	33
6.	Guidelines for Covering Emotionally Charged Events	33
7.	Sports Coverage	34
8.	Court Reporting	36
9.	Qualitative Selection	39

PART III - ETHICS **40**

PART IV – SOCIAL MEDIA **42**

1.	NAMPA Presence on Social Media Platforms	42
2.	Journalists' Conduct on Social Media	42



PART I

NAMPA WRITING STYLE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Namibia Press Agency (NAMPA) journalists produce news items and features that are distributed countrywide and all over the world.

NAMPA provides the following services:

News stories in text format

Photographs

News video clips

Voice clips

Radio bulletins

Public Relations Services

NAMPA has regional bureaus covering all parts of the country.

NAMPA has news exchange agreements with major global and regional news agencies such as Reuters, AP, AFP and Xinhua.

NAMPA's use of ICT enables the agency to provide instant analyses, in-depth interviews, news, features, photographs and audiovisual material.

In performing these tasks, the agency adheres to the highest ideals and principles of journalism and ensures objectivity in all its reporting.

2. OBJECTIVES OF NAMPA

The objective of NAMPA is to carry out a news agency operations and to provide Information Technology (IT) services for the production, collection and dissemination of media, information and IT products and services and the provision of such products and services to subscribers of the Agency and other persons, bodies and organisations.

- 2.1 To source local, regional, international and other news and feature articles and to exchange such news with other national and international news agencies;
- 2.2 To distribute news material to subscribers against payment either in

the form of subscription fees or news exchange, or on other terms as may be agreed upon;

- 2.3 To present objective and impartial information on any matter of public interest, both within and outside Namibia;
- 2.4 To, at all times, report news and information objectively and fairly;
- 2.5 To involve the rural population in the flow of news and information in the country and promote their participation in national decision making.

3. NEWSROOM LANGUAGE

We write in UK English.

Each trade/profession has certain words and expressions peculiar to it. Below are some of the expressions commonly used in journalism with which you should be familiar.

ALERT - A short message, no longer than 100 characters and written in present tense, alerting subscribers to an event about which the agency will provide more detailed coverage through an archived story. Also known as a snap or flash. Written as short as possible and in just capital letters. Headline is sometimes exactly the same as alert content. Is normally filed without

FLASH – See ‘Alert’.

EXAMPLE

FLASH:

Prime Minister survives plane crash.

SNAP:

This is a brief factual sentence breaking an important and urgent story. It is slugged and numbered. The “snap” should include the highlights of the proceedings, and be self-contained - that is, capable of being used by radio or online publications in the absence of fuller details.

EXAMPLE:

SNAP

Soccer

WINDHOEK, 21 AUG (NAMPA) – The Mainstay Cup Soccer finals has come to an end after violent disruption by soccer hooligans.

*More details should follow this announcement in short paragraphs in rapid succession.

UPDATE – An archived story with more information than a previously archived report on the same event. Should be filed with 'UPDATE 1 - ' before headline and a brief description or summary of new information provided in brackets before story.

WRAP – an archived story, no more than 800 words, that is a conglomerate of all updates on a developing story during the day. It includes all updates, details, colour, background and reactions on the story. 'WRAP - ' is inserted before the headline. A wrap is not a list of things that happened but broadly covers all aspects of s story or developing matter. It can also weave in the updates of other related issues or stories.

URGENT NEWS - Some news stories, because of their extra-ordinary importance and unexpectedness, deserve immediate attention and should be given priority.

URGENT - The gist of an important story in two or three paragraphs. Only the Editor on duty, not the Reporter, may decide when to use any of these special labels and which of them to use.

Their use must be absolutely justified. As soon as enough details are available, a normal report properly structured and written, should follow.

ADVANCE/CURTAIN RAISER - A preliminary report concerning a future event (usually a story about an event still to occur, or a copy of a speech/statement to be delivered/released later).

ANGLE – Perspective from which writer approaches an issue in a story.

BY-LINE - Author's name at the start of a story.

CAPS/UPPER CASE - Capital letters (opposite is lower case).

COPY - All stories/news items already written.

CUT - Reduce the length of a story or other news item.

DATeline - Line at the beginning of a story/news item which gives the date and place of origin.

EMBARGO - A restriction stating the date and/or time a story can be released to the general public.

FILLER - Brief news item used to fill small spaces on the page of, say, a newspaper or magazine.

FOLLOW-UP - Story giving later developments of an earlier story or event.

HEADLINE – Short sentence at the top of a story summarising the story.

PRESSER – A media conference.

SLUG - Catch-word used to identify a particular story/news item.

RUNNING STORY - A story that is still developing with new information coming in.

OFF THE CUFF – Refers to a speech or statement not prepared in advance.

OFF THE RECORD – Anything the journalist is told may not be attributed to the person who said it.

MEDIA CONFERENCE – Where media officials, journalists and other authoritative figures convene to ask and answer questions on a particular matter.

MEDIA BRIEFING – A meeting called by figures of authority or newsmakers to inform journalists and media houses of a development or event before its occurrence.

HAND-OUTS/PRESS-PACK - A collection of documents with factual information, including the media statement and supporting documents, on a development or event for journalists and media houses to use when producing content. NB: sometimes includes audiovisual material and is electronically distributed.

FREEBIES – branded promotional material, merchandise, vouchers, consumables and trips given to journalists so as to encourage coverage and provide free advertising. Freebies are sometimes given to encourage a journalist to go against ethical standards.

4. BASIC GUIDELINES

A good story must be:

- Factual
- Accurate
- Objective
- Complete
- Topical
- Interesting
- Concise
- Timely

Basically, the story must answer the three W's:

- What?
- When?
- Where?

As a general rule, the answers to these should be placed in the opening paragraph.

Three other questions could be:

- Who?
- Why?
- How?

But they do not necessarily arise in all stories.

To write a good news story, one must use:

- Short and simple words, sentences and paragraphs
- Active voice is generally more effective in a news story
- A news story should be written in simple and familiar language understood by the readers.
- Unfamiliar words and jargon should be avoided as far as possible.

The choice of words should be simple and elegant. When not avoidable as in a quotation, unfamiliar words and expressions should be explained in a simpler language.

BACKGROUND

Most stories consist of the results of events that have occurred, but this may not be adequate for a reader who is far from the event, hence, background information is essential for understanding.

RELEVANCE AND CONTEXT

The understanding of an event must be enhanced by journalists explaining its significance and/or possible consequences; contextualise eg 25 bags of rotten drought relief food found at the dumpsite. This amount of food could have helped feed 55 poor households for a whole week.

5. SOURCES

A news agency has to be very particular about the sources of the facts in its reports.

Most news stories require authentication by a proper source. The source must be identified early in the story.

The name and the title, official position, professional status or experience which qualifies him/her to be quoted must be correctly and fully stated.

The attributions like “anonymous source”, “an authoritative source”, “well informed journalist(s)” etc., may be used sparingly and only if the reporter is absolutely convinced that the information is correct.

There are certain types of stories where no source is required, for instance colour pieces, sports, conferences, judicial proceedings, etc.

In all other cases, a news agency report should be authenticated with proper source, since the agency itself does not accept any responsibility for the statement issued or facts offered by any person.

By dropping mention of the source, the agency would be needlessly accepting responsibility for views or information which may be open to question.

A good NAMPA story would preferably have more than one source.

NAMPA journalists should make a concerted effort to ensure that the voices of women sources are heard in their stories.

BALANCING A STORY AND RIGHT OF REPLY

If allegations are made in a story, journalists must check their facts with the accused or implicated party. If a controversial issue is raised, journalists must contact the implicated parties to balance the story.

6. SPEED AND ACCURACY

Speed is very important to a news agency which is expected to deliver news to subscribers as it happens. But a reporter should not sacrifice clarity, accuracy or objectivity in the interest of speed.

Very well-written copy turned in late in a competitive situation does no more good to the agency than a fast but inaccurate news story. The task is to achieve harmony between speed and accuracy. That is the hallmark of good agency copy.

It will always pay dividends if, before writing, a reporter spends a couple of

minutes organising in their mind the story they will write, putting down the main points in the order in which they will present them and thinking of a crisp, attractive lead.

Speed in clearance and transmission can be facilitated if the reporters draft their stories in a manner that calls for minimal touching-up at the news desk. Rewriting a story delays its clearance. This can sometimes prove fatal to the story in the competitive field.

When covering important events like elections, the national budget presentation and party congresses which last for many hours or days, the writing must reflect the various stages of the event - the beginning; partial climaxes or fresh major developments in the course of the event; and the end.

Advance reports (curtain raisers) may be filed even before the event begins. After the event, there may be follow-ups on the consequences, aftermath or reactions to it.

7. DEADLINE

Submit your article by the deadline. As the country's official news agency, NAMPA must always be first with the news. This means our deadline is immediately after the event occurs. Make sure you submit your time-bound articles to the sub-editor immediately after the event. Late articles usually miss the subscribers' deadlines and do not get printed, meaning all of your hard work will either be delayed until the next issue, or will not be published at all.

8. GATHER COLOUR

Whatever your assignment - be it in a court, on the street, in a home or in an office - gather colour material (i.e. descriptions of the surroundings and the people you meet).

Only in certain major hard-news stories is there a place for descriptive writing. But the colour material you gather might be useful in a subsequent news follow-up or news feature.

ALWAYS GATHER more facts and more "colour" than you think you will need. This is a safety measure, insurance against drying up prematurely when writing the story.

9. DRESS SENSE

Be presentable at all times. Dress to the occasion. Don't wear a T-shirt and

jeans - or similar informal garb - when interviewing a VIP, government minister, politician or any other professional person. Remember that some institutions such as courts and State House have specific dressing codes, respect that.

On the other hand, don't wear formal clothing when reporting in a squatter camp or other kind of slum, or when covering disturbances or labour demonstrations.

As a reporter you should aim to merge in with the surroundings, do not stick out like a sore thumb.

10. STRUCTURE OF THE NEWS STORY

A news agency story is normally written in inverted pyramid style, meaning the most important facts are at the top.

The other facts follow in their order of importance, except in special circumstances such as features, analyses and reviews. This enables the story to remain self contained, no matter how much is cut from the end.

A good news agency story should not be longer than 350 words. Features should be between 750 and 1 000 words.

10.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF A NEWS AGENCY STORY

10.1.1 THE SLUG

Every story, even a story consisting of only one take, must carry at the top a suitable CATCH-LINE or SLUG - an identifying tag.

Generally the slug is one word which is often the key word in the story, "reconciliation", "opposition", "project" and so forth.

"Kill", "Cancel", "Correction", should on no account be used as slugs. These words should be reserved for use in items to draw attention to instructions to "kill" or "cancel" a story or to correct an item.

10.1.2 THE MASTER SLUG

Occasionally, an event may take place over a large area and may have different facets e.g. Namibia's Independence celebrations, a party congress or national elections. It is advisable to give the stories or reports on all the facets of the event one master slug which carries information to differentiate the various parts.

EXAMPLE

Party Congress: Labour front

Party Congress: Messages

Party Congress: Political

When a story is continuing over several days, it should have the same master slug each day.

10.1.3 HEADLINE

Headline must be sharp and informative. Use active verb and short words. Avoid unfamiliar abbreviations. Convey one idea crisply and clearly. Journalists should keep headlines to less than 64 characters, including spaces.

10.1.4 BYLINE

Bylines are used on features, one-on-one interviews, exclusive stories and scoops. Byline is accorded at the discretion of the editor.

10.1.5 DATELINE

The dateline is the beginning of the first line of the first paragraph of each news agency report.

It indicates:

- If writing from a media release, use name of town you are filing from. Indicate in body of story that event occurred in another town. If it is an event you covered, use town where event occurred (in caps).
- The date the story is being filed
- The acronym or name of the agency in brackets

In the dateline, use the abbreviations of the name of the month in upper case.

EXAMPLE:

JAN, FEB, MAR, APR, MAY, JUN, JUL, AUG, SEP, OCT, NOV, DEC

Eg TSUMKWE, 12 SEP (NAMPA) - ...

We do not write the month in figures and the year must not be included in the dateline.

If an event has occurred in an obscure place (or if there is reference to such a place in the body of a copy), its location should be explained in terms of distance and direction from a well-recognised place like a city or a large town (often the dateline itself) or by noting the constituency or region.

Sometimes, the dateline itself is a small place, in which case it should be clarified as early as possible in the copy.

In the case of a foreign town, the readers should be provided with a fair idea of

this location.

When a Namibian Government official speaks at the United Nations in New York and the text of his/her speech is released in Windhoek, then you must use the Windhoek dateline.

10.2 FORMAT OF THE NAMPA STORY

Only the acronym of the agency should appear in the dateline, and the day should be before the month in the dateline.

EXAMPLE:

OSHAKATI, 25 MAY (NAMPA) -

BEGINNING

The lead or the first paragraph of each story should begin immediately after the dateline on the same line.

EXAMPLE:

SWAKOPMUND, 20 AUG (NAMPA) – Namibia's marine resources would play an important part in securing economic independence...

This was the conclusion made by Fishery experts meeting in

Below the last line of the last paragraph of each story, put the acronym or initials of the agency in brackets. Below the agency acronym, put the initials of the Reporter and Sub-Editor or Editor.

EXAMPLE:

Esau was speaking at the handing over of the Benguela Research Vessel.....

(NAMPA)

GS/MMS

The NAMPA copy should use the name of the day rather than today, tomorrow or yesterday.

EXAMPLE:

Namibia's Foreign Affairs Minister Theo-Ben Gurirab left for Lusaka Thursday after attending a week-long OAU Conference on...

10.2.1 THE OPENING PARAGRAPH OR INTRODUCTION

THE OPENING PARA OR INTRO of a news story should be short and crisp, so as to

catch attention and direct the reader's interest to the body of the story.

The lead and, at times, the subsequent paragraph should perform the following tasks:

- Introduce the story
- Arouse interest
- Summarise the basic facts to give the reader a relatively complete picture of the event. A good intro should not be longer than 30 words.

If the reader has to look over a sentence a second time to understand it, then that sentence has no place in news agency copy. It will certainly not make the lead.

To make a good news intro, for a feature or hard news, begin by focusing on WHAT happened and concentrate on the results of an event, action or situation through short active verbs. Convey one idea crisply and avoid abbreviations. The body will explain the process that brought about the results. Try your best to have just one, simple sentence and opt for two short sentences when you are handling a lot of information or a complex subject.

To begin, try the **10-Word approach** by identifying 10 key words or ideas that you would define as crucial and that your story would not stand without. For instance, a story about a fuel price hike would include keywords like oil, price, hike, consumer, pocket, money and budget. They don't have to be in the story and could just be ideas. Most or all of those words must appear in the first or second sentence.

If that does not work for you, try the **Crucial Word Approach** by identifying one word that you think is strong and crucial in the story. Then see how many words there are before the reader reaches that crucial word eg A 12-year-old girl held hostage for 20 days by a group of men in northern Nigeria is in a stable condition at the Lagos Central Hospital. In that sentence, the crucial word is 'hostage' and it took the reader four words to reach that crucial word. Placing it later in the sentence would make it harder for a reader to identify the crux of the story.

For hard news or current affairs, you are advised to write a **Direct Intro**: one sentence that is very direct about WHAT happened eg. The City of Windhoek Tuesday sacked 50 administrative staff members for failing to attend numerous disciplinary hearings on being late for work. The crucial word would be 'sacked'.

A **Bullet Intro** is exactly that; a short and powerful statement eg. The president is dead. This is suitable for newsbreaks, hard news and current affairs.

Use a **Quote Intro** when the quote is not too long and is very powerful eg

“There is no room for liars and thieves in this ministry,” said Minister of Public Enterprises, Leon Jooste at the final disciplinary hearing Wednesday on his deputy’s incompetence at a regional conference last month.

An **Intrigue Intro** is a long question that says WHAT happened but then asks a question about it, and is suitable for a feature, analysis or discursive story eg Members of Cabinet will soon be cruising around in brand new black Mercedes Benz’s worth more than N.dollars 20 million but how does their luxurious mobility guarantee effective service delivery? This kind of an intro would not be suitable for a hard news story. Keep in mind that your intro defines the angle of your story and view through which information in the body of your story would be judged from.

A **Figurative or Colour Intro** is more suitable for a feature or matter that has been developing or something that was expected to happen, such as the mass housing programme in Namibia, the state of public services and the implementation of laws eg. Following weeks of the ping-pong style debate on how religion should not influence the law-making process, President Hage Geingob Monday officially signed the bill that makes abortion legal and an option to any woman in Namibia.

News agency copy, except in special circumstances, is written in the inverted pyramid style with the most significant fact at the top or the intro, others following in the order of importance.

A good intro enables a story to remain self-contained, no matter how much of it is cut from the bottom.

Depending upon their individual needs, deadlines and availability of space, newspapers and radio stations delete parts of news agency copy and still the story remains complete in essential details.

It is for this reason that the first “take” of a news report must invariably bring out the dramatic impact of an event, each succeeding paragraph adding an essential detail without being dependent in content or style on what follows.

When dealing with a multiple-element story, the lead paragraph should give a summary of the most important elements in the first sentence. In some cases, it may be necessary to concentrate on the lead paragraph on one element and then deal with other themes in the order of their importance.

Remember the following points when writing intros:

- Base the intro on the key point(s) of the story;
- The intro should be able to stand alone;

- The intro should be positive, not negative;
- The intro should not be obsessed with the news source;
- The intro should appreciate the strength of words (an intro should be strong);
- Keep the intro simple - short words and sentence(s);
- Do not start the intro with quotes unless the whole story revolves around the quote;
- Do not overload the intro with too much detail;
- Do not let names, places, titles, etc throttle the intro;
- Do not have unidentified facts, people or places in the intro;
- Avoid questions in a news story intro;
- Avoid abbreviations - especially in-house abbreviations;
- The news intro should not contain personal opinions;
- Beware the tenses in reported speech;
- Avoid a fixation with dates and times;

Avoid beginning the intro with;

- At a meeting...
- In a speech...
- According to...
- In the opinion of
- It has been...
- There is ...
- There will be...
- Yesterday/Today...
- Recently...
- Last weekend... etc.

10.2.2 LEAD

- A lead is a device to be used in the case of developing stories for updating the top as necessary in the light of fresh facts as they become available. Such stories include a strike, a river flood, an air crash or a train accident or other mishap, a VIP in hospital, a conference or political meeting, an election, a State visit, or a sport event of long duration. All these may require one or more leads as the story advances with the day.
- A lead can also be used to tie up loose ends of a dispersed story or to

provide a combined top for two to three different items pertaining to a single subject or to a related development. In some cases, unless there are hard developments or a sudden turn in the situation, leads may be issued at fixed hours to catch deadlines of radio bulletins or special editions of newspapers while the story keeps moving.

- Leads, however, should not be taken at every new turn. Every single development in a story does not merit a lead. Certain developments of a more or less routine nature can be pegged on the original story, with a view at restricting the number of leads.
- A lead often overhauls a substantial part of a story or even the entire story. Such a lead should not be attempted at a late hour, close to deadline, when newspapers would not be able to recase material already composed. Instead, the lead should be in the form of a brief intro consisting of one or two paragraphs.
- This would introduce whatever new elements have emerged in the situation at the time, such as, a new number of casualties in a train accident. In this case, a pick-up line should be given to provide a link with the earlier story at the appropriate point.
- Occasionally, the need may arise for an undated lead - a lead without a dateline. This happens when an event, such as cyclonic storm, is covered from many points, ordinarily, an undated lead would be a one or two-take top of the stories from various places. Since such a lead does not have a dateline, care should be taken to mention the day of occurrence in the body of the copy and to give the location or places mentioned in the copy.
- Each news item has to be in a format which recipients would easily understand, with the indications of priority, destination, place or origin and identification, including the sequence number and slug, on the top.

10.2.3 BODY

- The rest of the story is the BODY. It comprises paragraphs in which the details of the events are arranged in logical order of importance.

10.2.4 CONCLUSION

A story must have an ending. The ending must allow for a follow-up, leave the reader with new thoughts or wrap up the main ideas of the story.

11. FEATURE ARTICLES

A feature article is a factual story about an event, a situation, an aspect of life,

an idea or any other subject that is written to inform, educate and/or entertain. Facts, focus, creativity and timelessness are the main characteristics of a feature story.

NAMPA features should be between 750 and 1000 words in length.

FORMAT

A feature article must have a headline or title that summarises its content. Headline should be in caps. A feature article must bear the byline of the author. Dateline and ending should also be used.

EXAMPLE:

PHILANTHROPIST TO AID DISABLED

By Olavi Haikera

(NAMPA FEATURES SERVICE)

OSHAKATI, 26 JUN (NAMPA) -----

(NAMPA)

OH/ND

11.1 What is a feature?

Feature articles focus on events or individuals and offer details of the human experience, giving more detail and description than hard news stories so that readers can fully understand the interesting dimensions of the subject.

Writing a feature article is a highly creative and fun activity, even though it takes hard work and planning to write it as effectively and engaging as possible.

Find a compelling story; Do research on your topic; and Decide on the type of feature you want to write.

Feature types:

Human Interest features focusing on an issue that impact people's lives.

Profile feature focusing on a specific individual's character or lifestyle.

Instructional feature articles that teach readers how to do something.

Historical features that honour historical events or developments.

Seasonal features when writing about things that occur in certain times of year, such as the Omaongo festival or December holidays.

Behind the Scenes: These features give readers insight into an unusual process, issue or event.

Consider your audience and determine the angles that will appeal to those readers.

11.2 Interviewing Subjects

- Schedule a 30-45 minute interview at a time and place convenient for the interviewee.
- Prepare for your interview. Do research ahead of time to ensure that you are asking the most compelling questions. Have a long list of questions to keep the conversation flowing. Know your interview subject's background and experience, as well as their views on the subject that you're interviewing them about.
- Arrive early for the interview.
- Audio-record the interview, but be sure to ask your interviewee if it's okay to audio-record the interview and don't pressure them if they decline audio recording.
- Confirm details about your interviewee.
- Ask open-ended questions. Questions that rely on yes or no answers will not give you very rich information. Instead, ask questions that start with "how" or "why."
- Another good option is a question that begins "Tell me about a time when...."
- Listen actively. Listening is a key component of a good interview.
- Ask follow up questions. Part of being a good interviewer is determining when someone is finished talking about a particular subject and when it will be helpful to prompt them for further discussion. You can also use your follow up questions to make connections between ideas.
- Make notes during and immediately after the interview.

11.3 Preparing to Write the Feature

Outline your article; review your notes; select quotes; draft a structure for the article; consider what you absolutely must have in the story and what can be cut.

Decide on approximate length for the article. Nampa feature stories run between 750 and 1 000 words.

Formats for your article:

- Start by describing a dramatic moment and then uncover the history that led up to that moment.
- Use a story-within-a-story format, which relies on a narrator to tell the story of someone else.
- Start the story with an ordinary moment and trace how the story became unusual.

11.4 Writing the Feature

Write a hook to open your story to hook your reader and draw them into your story.

Start with an interesting fact, a quote, or an anecdote for a good hook.

Your opening paragraph should only be about 2-3 sentences.

Expand on your lead in the second paragraph.

Follow your outline. You've drafted your article in outline form, which can help you stay on track to building a good feature article. The outline can also help you remember how details connect to each other and how quotes support certain points that you're making.

By writing a feature article, you have the chance to describe people and scenes to the reader. Describe a setting or person so that the reader can clearly envision it in their mind.

Don't use too many quotes. While it can be tempting to include the interviewee's own words in the story, don't rely too much on quoting them. Otherwise, this becomes more of a straightforward interview. Write around their quotes to give them context, build the story and help the reader interpret what the interviewee is saying.

Choose language that is appropriate to your readers. Consider the target audience of the publication for which you are writing and write to their level and interest. Do not assume they are familiar with what you're talking about, so you may need to explain certain things. Be sure to spell out acronyms and explain jargon or slang. Write in a style that is more conversational, rather than stiff and academic.

Keep your opinion out of the article. A feature article is a piece that conveys information and detail about a person or phenomenon. It is not an opportunity for you to give your opinion on a topic. Rather, your personality is conveyed through your writing style.

Revise your article. Once you finish writing, put the article away for some time to get some distance from it. Come back to it when you are fresh and read through it all the way. Think of ways to sharpen descriptions, clarify points and streamline explanations. What areas do you need to cut out? What areas need additional information?

11.5 Finalising the Article

- Check the accuracy of facts, and check again. Double-check how names are spelled, the order of events, and other pertinent details.

- Check spelling and grammar and/or get feedback on the article from a friend or colleague.
- Write a headline of no more than 64 characters. A headline should be action-oriented and should convey why the story is important. It should grab the reader and draw them into the article.

WARNING

*Be sure to represent your subjects fairly and accurately. Never attribute anything to a person if it was not said by them. Don't assume, ask for clarity if you are not sure about something that was said. Feature articles can be problematic if they are telling only one side of a story. If your interviewee makes claims against a person or company, make sure you talk with that person or company. If you print claims against someone, even if it's your interviewee, you might risk being sued for defamation.

12. PHOTOGRAPHY - WRITING CAPTIONS

A caption is written information accompanying a photograph or offering a description of the actions in the photograph. Captions are always written in the present tense.

Writing a caption starts with a dateline, which includes the name of the place where the picture was taken in upper case; (comma); the date on which the photo was taken; the month and the year in full; and then one space followed by a dash and another space.

At the end of the caption, the name of the photographer should be in brackets preceded by the words 'Photo by:'. The caption is then closed off with 'NAMPA' outside the brackets.

Example: OMARURU, 17 September 2015 - President Hage Geingob cuts a ribbon to officially open the Okakarara kindergarten. (Photo by: Mathias Nanghanda) NAMPA

If a photo is contributed, we follow the same format. Start with the dateline, which includes the name of the place where the picture was taken in upper case; (comma); the date on which the photo was taken; the month and the year in full; and then one space followed by a dash and another space. We conclude with (Photo: Contributed) NAMPA

If it is not clear when the photo was taken, omit the date.

When identifying more than two persons in the frame of a picture, it is always important to mention their titles and names, starting from the left to the right,

indicated with a L, and R in brackets before or after their name, or if you are to list the names, insert (L-R) before the list of names. If subject is in centre of photograph, indicate with a C. If a prominent person is one of the subjects of your picture, start with that person irrespective of their position. The rest of the people in the picture are listed from left to right.

If it is a group picture of more than five people, identification for each person is not necessary. If there is a photo of a prominent person with other people who are unidentifiable, we identify the subject of the photo and state that he is pictured with eg other delegates or members of an association, etc.

Example: LUSAKA, 17 December 2015 - SADC Heads of State and Government pose for photographs ahead of the opening session of the 11th SADC Summit held at Mulungushi Hall. (Photo by: Esme Konstantinus) NAMPA

If it is a group picture of recipients posing with one to three donors, only the donors should be identified.

Pictures attached to a story must relate to the story and portray the mood of the subject in a story. If the story is talking about an angry person, the face of the person should show that, not a smiling or laughing face.

13. FOLLOW-UPS

DON'T NEGLECT THOSE FOLLOW-UPS!

AN EFFICIENT REPORTER goes out on a story and returns to the newsroom with two things in mind.

1. The best way to construct the story, and
2. The follow-up potential.

More often than not, gems created by the important news-break are just allowed to disappear in the sludge. This is bad journalism. Follow-ups to stories are imperative. Readers expect them.

Some major stories are like jigsaw puzzles. It takes time for the pieces to be fitted together to complete the picture. It is your job to reveal every important aspect of a big story.

Not just the words, WHEN and WHATs, but the WHYs and HOWs, too.

At times this might take three or four days to achieve, with a follow-up story published each day. Follow-ups make for continuity. For newspaper readers continuity is vital when a major issue or accident makes news.

The good news agency pursues certain types of stories until the lemon is

squeezed dry, in other words until every development has fallen into place. This ensures that readers will understand the full significance of what has happened. A wide range of news stories calls for the follow-up treatment.

Here are some examples:

Disasters, including cyclones and floods, and accidents involving many people. Very often these stories provide both hard news and feature follow-ups.

Here are the sort of questions that should occur to you as a good journalist:

Could the disaster have been avoided? If so, how was it caused (in the case of an accident). By an error of human judgement or was the fault mechanical? If mechanical, can the fault be explained in layman's language and perhaps be illustrated; what do the authorities say? What do the survivors say? What of the family (or individual) who should have been on the aircraft/ship/bus/train - or in the flood disaster zone.

Also likely to be ripe for follow-up are these types of stories:

A CABINET RESHUFFLE: What are the individual merits or weaknesses of the new Ministers and those given new portfolios? What is the significance of the new appointments?

MAJOR POLICY CHANGES: How will the changes impact the lives of people?

GOVERNMENT SCANDALS: These, as we know, often involve ministers and senior government officials.

RIOTS AND OTHER DISTURBANCES: What were the causes? Who were the ringleaders? What of the casualties? What did the damage amount to? What can be done to ensure there is no repeat of the trouble?

LARGE SCALE EVICTIONS: Why are the people evicted? What alternative accommodation is being found for them and where? What do the evicted people feel about their predicament?

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF COSTLY AND VITAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS:

These are always worth looking into with the object of getting more information than contained in the official communiqué.

If we explain how people will benefit from a new project, we are doing a useful job.

MASTERING THE FOLLOW-UP PHILOSOPHY:

Like most techniques in journalism, it's a state of mind. For an experienced professional journalist the bells signifying follow-up potential will ring in the mind with practically every publication he picks up and flicks through, even

foreign ones.

The experienced journalist gets ideas from foreign newspapers and magazines which he or she can adapt to local use.

Every staff journalist, from the humble trainee or cub-reporter to the editor, should have an eye and an ear for the follow-up story. Reporters who leave this aspect to the news editor are not pulling their weight. The same goes for sports, business and feature writers.

14. READER'S INTEREST

Relating a report to the reader enhances its acceptability and in this regard, an agency has to keep in constant view the interest of people of various regions.

Figures and statistics have a meaning for the economist and the research scholar. To the lay reader they convey little, but they can be made to communicate if they are linked to his/her personal experience or related to his/her needs and interests.

A useful example is the budget; where the reader is more interested in surplus or deficit, or whether the total outlay is large or meagre than in the likely increases or reductions in the cost of living, etc.

15. QUOTATIONS

The inclusion of direct quotations from a speech or statement lends greater credibility to a news story.

- When quoting a portion of a speech, statement or document, reproduce it accurately and unabridged.
- Quote only the most significant portions of the speech.
- When grammatical errors, slang, slips of tongue etc, occur in a speech that is being quoted, the journalist may correct these errors without changing the meaning or context of the speech.

When there is a quoted part within the main quotation, the main quotation should be enclosed within double quotation marks and the sub-quote within single quotation marks eg "The owner of the farm said 'You are not allowed on my land' while kicking the worker," he said.

In the event of both ending together, the sub-quote should close first, then the main quotation, with space separating the two quotation marks, eg "The owner of the farm said 'You are not allowed on my land'," he said.

The full stop should be placed within the quotation marks when the quotation is a full sentence and outside when the quotation is not.

Where quotes run to more than one paragraph, do not close quotes at the end of the paragraph, but do reopen them at the start of the next paragraph to show the reader the quote is continuing. Only close quotes at the end of the quoted segment.

Single quotation marks are used only in headlines, titles (eg of books, reports, etc) and themes.

Quotations should be used sparingly. Except in the coverage of policy statements, important speeches and documents, quotes should be restricted to the more telling portions, including picturesque, or sentences that reinforce a point already made.

Sometimes a couple of words within quotation marks are more effective than a whole sentence. But too many quotations can spoil copy.

16. PUNCTUATION

Punctuation marks, when used appropriately make for clarity and easy reading. When used inappropriately, they lead to confusion and distortion.

FULL STOP (OR PERIOD)

- Is used at the end of sentence.

COLON

- Used to introduce a quotation that is longer than a sentence and remains within a paragraph.

SEMI-COLON

- A semi-colon is used to separate a list of phrases in a sentence.
- Also used to separate two sentences that are grammatically independent but have a closely connected meaning, eg Angie is a good speaker; she speaks very clearly.

COMMA

- Use the comma to separate items in a list
- Commas are used as a 'soft break' within a sentence, rather like a breathing space when speaking
- Used for parenthetical phrases eg Mulisa Simiyasa, the head of Nampa's bureau in the Otjozondjupa Region, was elected as employees' council representative at the weekend.

DASH AND HYPHEN

- They serve nearly two opposite purposes and are, therefore, not interchangeable. A dash separates, while a hyphen joins two ideas. A dash is spaced, a hyphen not. Use hyphens sparingly.

COMPOUND VERBS (that is verbs in association with prepositions)

- Such as swear in, take off, set up, throw away, run off, get away, are not hyphenated when used as verbs, whatever the tense.

But these expressions or their forms are hyphenated when used as nouns or adjectives.

EXAMPLES: Three Cabinet Ministers were sworn in on Monday (not hyphenated).

The swearing-in ceremony took place in the Freedom Hall, in Windhoek.

17. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

17.1 Unless an abbreviation is widely known, you must always spell it out in full the first time you mention it and write it in brackets. Use the abbreviated form in any subsequent mentions.

17.2 There is no need to put a point (period) after each letter of the abbreviated form of the name of a country or organisation. We do not use abbreviated titles such as Hon, Rev, Mr, Dr. Also avoid Madame, Lady, etc.

Examples of widely used local and international abbreviations with which the reporter should be familiar (if you don't know what they stand for, ASK)

We do not use abbreviations of ranks such as Chief Superintendent (Chief Supt); Flight Lieutenant (Flt.Lt.).

18. NUMBERS, PERCENTAGES AND FRACTIONS

18.1 Write out NUMBERS one to nine (except when giving currency amounts, street numbers, temperatures, betting, data, dimensions, numbers with fractions, sports scores, etc.)

We do not write out ages of people in numbers, only in digits.

METRIC MEASURES:

NAMPA uses metric measures for distance, length, width, height, weight, volume, etc.

This means that when you get information which contains imperial (non-metric) measures you should convert them.

N.B.

- I. Many diaries, dictionaries, etc, contain conversion table of both imperial and metric measure. Use them.
- II. In the metric system, TONNES (not tons) are used for heavyweights but OUNCES, although imperial are still used for the very light weight of some precious metals such as gold (the price of gold is always expressed as so much per ounce).
- III. For TEMPERATURES we use the centigrade scale (not Fahrenheit) and these should be written thus: "25 degrees Celsius", "minus five degrees Celsius" etc. Do not try to use degree sign, write out words degrees Celsius.

18.2 All other numbers from 10 upwards should be written in figures.

18.3 For numbers running into round figure millions, use a combination of figures and the word "million" e.g. N.dollars 3.5 million (not N.dollars 3 500 000).

18.4 For percentages, write out the percentage figure, followed by the words "per cent" (TWO WORDS).

For FRACTIONS, we write these out when they stand alone with a whole number (e.g. two-thirds, not $2/3$), When in combination with a whole number, express as a decimal (e.g. $8 \frac{1}{4}$ would be expressed as 8,25 – note the use of comma, not a full stop).

19. TIME

The difference in time between one country and another also needs to be kept in mind while drafting reports intended for international distribution. It is, therefore, desirable that any reference to the hour of the day, besides being mentioned on the basis of the local standard time, should also be accompanied by corresponding hour according to Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) within brackets (together with the day or date when necessary).

The recipient agency at its discretion may then convert the GMT hour into its own standard time so as to relate it to its readership.

20. CURRENCIES

Stories circulated within one's own country refer to monetary matters, appropriately enough, in local currency.

But currencies differ from country to country, and even though in some cases, the currencies of several countries bear an identical name, their values in the international market are not the same as, for instance, the U.S. dollar, the Hong Kong dollar and the Australian dollar.

In the circumstances, if reports are intended specifically for international distribution carry figures merely in local currencies, they will have little impact on the readership in the receiving countries.

A simple expedient for making these figures understood by the recipients would be to mention the amount first in the local currency (to provide necessary local colour to the copy) and give its equivalent in U.S. dollars or pounds sterling in brackets.

If the focus is on the foreign currency, the foreign currency is written first and the conversion into local currency in brackets.

When several amounts are referred to in a single copy, it is enough if the equivalent is given after the first amount.

There is no need to provide the equivalent every time.

Better still would be to provide the conversion formula at one point. Thus: Namibia's budget for this year on Education is N.dollars 2.4 billion (1 U.S. dollar = N.dollars 10.00).

The recipient agency, if it so wants, can convert the amount from dollars or pounds into the currency of its own country so as to make the copy better appreciated by its readers.

Since the values of the U.S. dollar and pound sterling are not constant but subject to daily, even hourly fluctuations or change, the equivalents or the conversions formula cannot hold good in precise terms over a period of time. But this does not matter, since what is required to be conveyed is only an approximation of the size of the amount in question.

- 20.1** When you mention an amount of money in Namibian currency, you should write it out as "N.dollars 125" or "N.dollars 7 million".
- 20.2** Write "N.dollars 125", not "N.dollars 125.00". (The zeros are unnecessary).
- 20.3** Use full stops to separate cents figures e.g. N.dollars 125.86 and not N.dollars 125,86.

- 20.4** For foreign currencies, write out the type in full at all times: e.g. pound sterling 284 (for British currency) U.S. dollar 390, French francs 500.
- 20.5** Use figures and not words for currency amounts even when the amounts are very small e.g. N.dollars 5, N.dollars 50, N.dollar 1

21. CORRECTIONS

There are times (hopefully rare) when a reporter makes a mistake or gives wrong information in a story. When this happens, or if someone objects to a story or any part of a story, the Manager of Editorial Services and the News Editor (or whoever is acting in their place) must be notified at once BEFORE any correction is put out. After these two senior officials have been informed and have decided that a correction must be done, the relevant correction is sent out either as a message or a story.

A correction in the form of a message is used when an error is noticed soon after (the same day) copy in question has gone out but has not yet been used by Nampa subscribers.

EXAMPLE:

ATTENTION – CORRECTION: Story corrects the figure 5 to 15 in second paragraph.

A correction in the form of a story is used when an error is noticed sometimes after (usually next day) the copy at issue has gone out and has in all likelihood been used by one or more subscribers. If the above is to be sent out as a story correction a day after the incorrect copy went out, it would be done as follows

EXAMPLE:

CORRECTION: Title of story

WINDHOEK, 09 DEC (NAMPA) – It was incorrectly reported Tuesday, 08 December, that the workers at the Katutura Metal Products Company had received a five per cent pay rise last year.

They, in fact received a 15 per cent wage increase, the company's management pointed out today. The error is sincerely regretted.

(NAMPA)

AS

22. KILLING COPY

Sometimes, it is necessary to cancel a story which has already gone out. When this need arises, you should send out a "kill" in the form of a message thus:

EXAMPLE:

Kill! Kill! Kill!

WINDHOEK, 25 OCT (NAMPA) – Please kill, repeat kill, our story of Wednesday, 25 October slugged “bank rate”. Minister of Finance says the announcement of a new bank rate was premature as no final decision has yet been made.

(NAMPA)

Note: A “kill” message must always state why a story is being killed.

Never use the word “kill” as slug as this might be confused with a “kill” message and lead to the cancellation of a perfectly good story.

23. EMBARGOED COPY

At times a reporter gets a report or a statement ahead of the time of its official release, or a copy of a speech before it is actually delivered. In such cases, the reporter can write a story or stories based on the report, statement or speech ahead of the release or delivery time but he/she must put an embargo on the story or stories. This is done in the following manner:

(Embargoed: not for broadcast or publication until 14h00 Friday)

OSHAKATI, 18 FEB (NAMPA) – Former teacher and diplomat Vincent Malebo, was Friday appointed new Minister of Information and Broadcasting...

Malebo takes over from ...

As long as the embargo is clearly stated on the copy, the story can and should be transmitted to NAMPA’s clients, even before the embargo time. However, in the case of speeches, it is absolutely essential to check the speech against the delivery or, if this is not possible, to ensure (a) that the speech was actually delivered, (b) who actually delivered it, and (c) that there were no substantial departures (or changes) from the original text of the speech before the story is transmitted to Nampa subscribers.

* When archiving an embargoed story, journalist should ensure that they select ‘No’ for the RSS Feed and ‘Paid’ for the Subscription Type.

24. WHEN TO USE CAPS

Capitalise titles when they precede a person’s name. If a title follows a person’s name, do not capitalise, but capitalise the name of the institution. Village is not capitalised even if it follows the name. Constituency is never capitalised, region

is capitalised if only one is mentioned. In a street name, the word 'street' should be capitalised eg Mahatma Gandhi Street.

The word location should not be used, instead use 'residential area'.

25. SPEECHES READ ON SOMEONE'S BEHALF

* The person who delivers a speech on behalf of someone should not be mentioned. Instead use:

"In a speech read on his behalf, Pohamba said..."

"In a speech prepared for delivery at [the event], Pohamba said..."

PART II

BEING A NAMPA JOURNALIST

1. THE ANATOMY OF NEWS-GATHERING

NEWS-GATHERING at its best is an art. There is more to it than asking a few questions and hoping for some interesting replies.

A good news-gatherer combines the science of diplomacy with the art of acting.

A poorly gathered story will be a poor story. A strong story is the result of first-rate interviewing, keen observation and the reporter's awareness of the situation.

INTERVIEWING is an art in itself. It demands of the practitioner a keen sense of psychology, diplomacy and quick wittedness, and the ability to ask relevant questions in a forceful yet courteous manner.

OBSERVATION

You can train yourself to be a perceptive observer.

Without fully developed power of observation you can never be a first rate hard news reporter or good feature writer.

AWARENESS: To be fully in command when gathering news, you need to be aware of the significance of the situation or event you are covering. This awareness might stem from pre-interview research or previously acquired knowledge or experience of the situation or subject.

INQUISITIVENESS: This is another essential aspect of news and features gathering. Inquisitiveness implies among other things the urge to question everything you are told and everything you are shown. As a journalist - as a writer of any kind - inquisitiveness must become a part of your personal make-up.

It is easy to pick out news stories and features in which the reporter has failed to ask either the right questions, or enough questions. These stories are incomplete. They may have length, but they lack meat. They leave the readers asking questions that should have been answered in the story.

WHO? WHEN? WHAT? WHERE? WHY? HOW? SO WHAT?

SUCCESSFUL NEWS GATHERING demands the development of certain other skills and personal qualities.

Here are some of them:

- a) The ability to listen carefully to what you are being told and to differentiate between the wheat and the chaff.
- b) You must consciously develop an agile, flexible and creative mind.
- c) The ability to remain calm and polite (but never meek) even when angered by an interviewee.
- d) The ability to assess people accurately and relate to them according to their temperament and intellect.
- e) Journalism is a dignified profession. Be dignified always, even when under pressure.

DEVELOP A HEALTHY MEASURE OF SCEPTICISM

Never attend a media conference all starry-eyed and ready to believe everything. Never believe all that is said in the way it is said. In your mind, question everything that the speaker utters. While you are taking notes, put a question mark against anything that you intend to question later.

FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES

1. If you have time, get to know something about the subject to be discussed before you arrive at a media conference. Try to know something about the person or organisation which called the conference.
2. Arrive at the conference early and try to get a position reasonably close to the speaker. This will make it easier for you during question time.
3. At question time, raise your hand. When the speaker indicates that you can go ahead, announce your name and the name of the news organisation you represent. This, universally, is the correct form. It is also a matter of courtesy; the speaker is entitled to know who is questioning him/her.
4. When asking a question, **SPEAK LOUDER THAN YOU NORMALLY WOULD**. Utter each word distinctly so that it is clear for the person

- expected to answer the question.
5. Make sure you are asking a question, not stating an opinion.
 6. When necessary be aggressive in your questioning of the speaker, but never unpleasant. Keep your questions direct and short. The ideal tone to aim at when asking questions is a combination of toughness tempered with charm and politeness.
 7. Don't be overawed by the eminence of the person you are quizzing. Be polite but don't fawn.
 8. If you sense a feature story in one of the subjects raised at the press conference, see the speaker after the conference and arrange a date for a personal interview. When you approach the speaker about this, ensure that journalists representing other news organisations are not within earshot.
 9. Attend a press conference in a spirit of competitiveness. Be determined that YOU will get something out of it that other newsmen and women might miss. Sometimes this is impossible, but it is worth trying. A word with the speaker or one of their aides after the conference may give you that exclusive angle.
 10. To get the best out of a media conference - out of any news event or incident -you need to use your imagination and become acquainted with the subject and its background. You have got to see a little beyond its more obvious significance.
 11. If you don't already know the person running the media conference, ask for their telephone number and other particulars before leaving the conference. A good idea is to get their business card as this would also help with the spelling of someone's name. It is unforgivable to spell someone's name wrong, so if they don't have a business card, ask them to write it down. The person might be useful to you on future assignment. In any case, the telephone number might be of immediate use to you if you need to check a point or two while writing your story.
 12. Don't attend a media conference with preconceived ideas. Even if you attend a media conference with preconceived ideas, be prepared to have them changed. Leave your mind open to all kinds of possibilities. Basically, of course, you are looking for a hard-news story - genuine news, not blatant propaganda or sales publicity. But if news is in short supply, don't despair. If the occasion lends itself to a colour story, start thinking along those lines while still at the conference. Observe the scene around you and make the appropriate notes.
 13. Follow the questions and answers carefully. There is nothing more embarrassing than asking a question that has already been dealt with.

2. MEDIA BRIEFING SESSIONS

Nowadays, the term media conference instead of press conference is preferred considering such conferences are open to all arms of the media such as news agencies and television. A media briefing tends to be less formal than a media conference. The news briefing is seen by some government and industrial organisations as a way of getting over what they consider to be more important information to a carefully selected group of journalists – political correspondents and commentators, defence correspondents, and other specialists, such as motoring writers and science and medical correspondents.

Sometimes, what is discussed at a news briefing is for immediate publication, or at least a part of it is. On other occasions, the subject might be off-the-record background to a major event that is about to take place.

At a news briefing, the accent is usually on up-to-the-minute background information on a specialised subject rather than breaking hard news. Bear with it. It can pay off.

3. MEDIA CONFERENCES AND ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

- Before attending a media conference, familiarise yourself with the topic at hand and do extensive research about it.
- It is encouraged that you ask questions during a media conference especially if you want the response on record.
- If there is a story a journalist wants (a scoop), try and get a one-on-one interview with the main speaker at the media conference.
- Discuss your questions with the editors before you attend a media conference.
 - Avoid closed-ended questions which could be answered with just a simple 'Yes' or 'No'.
 - Open-ended questions must be structured carefully so as to avoid vague responses from sources.
 - Always be in charge and in control of the interview. Be assertive and do not allow source to take you to Cape Fria and back.
- Media conferences can also be used to get answers on other matters not necessarily related to the topic at hand.

4. HANDLING MEDIA RELEASES

Media releases and hand-outs are a familiar part of a journalist's life. Their authors are usually press or information officers, who sometimes have been practising journalists.

It follows that media releases vary in quality, both in news content and in presentation (some have the real news almost entirely while others are bogged down in unnecessary verbiage).

Some, very few, come into a newspaper editorial office well constructed, with a good intro, a professional summary of the facts, and substantiation. Even so, there is more than one view of what makes news, and just because a media release is well written does not mean it must be used.

Media releases are mostly sent out with an eye towards gaining free publicity, not with supplying media houses with news.

Press and information officers, whether employed by political parties, ministries, businesses, or less formal organisations like clubs and societies, might want to use Nampa to promote their interests, so watch out.

Sometimes denials of criticism against governments are put over through the medium of media conferences. Individual politicians sometimes resort to the media conference when they feel their public image is tarnished, or when they feel they have something earth-shattering to say. Be careful not to be drawn into a war-of-words which might turn you into a ping pong ball of 'he said', 'she said'.

Sometimes when media conferences are called by institutions to react to reports written by other media houses, we do not necessarily have to jump on to the bandwagon unless, in rare cases, where the issue raised has a national character or when we have written the story ourselves before.

Trade union leaders call press conferences to explain their stand on labour disputes. So do employers. Some of the stories from those sources may yield strong news copy. But you can never be certain.

In terms of news value, a person in a high position is just as likely to provide weak news copy as anyone else. And that includes visiting VIPs. But you can't ignore them, any of them. Occasionally they say something - perhaps in one sentence, or two or three which provides the reporter with a first-rate front page story, the "splash" (lead) perhaps.

Lower down the scale you come across some real time-wasters. Among them are entrepreneurs who think the biggest news of the day is their latest sales gimmick. But a bright journalist might even turn that non-event into something worth publishing.

5. ADVERTISING

Companies and other organisations often try to get free publicity or advertising through newspapers and news agencies.

The policy is **NOT** to give this free advertising, by **NOT** mentioning the name of the company or organisation in news stories unless:

- 5.1 The reporter is specifically writing a story about or directly involving the company/organisation.
- 5.2 It cannot be avoided. In which case the policy is to name the company/organisation once and thereafter refer to it as the “company”, “association”, “institute” or whichever is applicable.
- 5.3 When reporting on an event or function taking place at a certain hotel or similar establishment which, apart from hosting the event/function has no other connection with it, do not mention the name of the hotel or establishment. Simply refer to it as a “local hotel”, “Tsumeb hotel”, “a hotel here”, etc. The rule is that if the venue is a commercial entity which profits from its mentioning, it should not be named.
- 5.4 In the interests of promoting charity, the “no free” advertising rule is often relaxed when writing stories concerning charitable (non-profit making) organisations, such as the SPCA, Lifeline/Childline, etc.

6. GUIDELINES FOR COVERING EMOTIONALLY CHARGED EVENTS

When covering an emotionally charged story such as a funeral, riot, accident or a violent crime, it is essential that you prepare yourself emotionally and psychologically.

This is because it is necessary to steel yourself against the emotions at play around you. Also remember to remain objective at all times and most importantly, to ensure your safety.

Don't be afraid of fear itself. Fear is natural. We all experience it from time to time.

As reporters in an emotionally charged situation we have to control our fear in order to produce a clear report of the story we are witnessing.

BEAR THE FOLLOWING IN MIND:

- 6.1 DON'T arrive in a car or other vehicle to report on the antics of an angry mob. The likelihood is that part of the mob will turn its attention to the vehicle, overturning it and setting it on fire.
- 6.2 DON'T try to resist the tide as the mob moves in a certain direction.

If you are in the middle of the mob, don't try to fight your way out. This could make you a target of their anger. Rather allow yourself to be swept along with the mob.

- 6.3 In some riot situations it can be dangerous to produce a notebook. Try to retain in your mind the details of what you are witnessing. One of the problems of taking notes at the scene of a disturbance is that the rioters may mistake you for plainclothes police - and the police identify you, correctly, as a reporter. Both of these situations can result in you getting beaten up.
- 6.4 Having absorbed sufficient "colour" material at the scene of a disturbance, move away to a safe distance and make notes while details are fresh in your mind.
- 6.5 If you are arrested while covering a riot or other disturbance, try to inform your office as quickly as possible.
- 6.6 In covering a natural disaster, or a fire, a house collapse, a road, rail or air accident, etc., you may describe the scene as you personally see it, but for facts and figures you would need to quote an authentic source.

7. SPORTS COVERAGE

VARIED INTERESTS

A special feature about sports readership is that different segments of the population take interest in different sports. Not many people are equally interested in several sports. Some are interested in cricket, others in hockey, or tennis, or football, or badminton, etc., each according to their taste. There are other events like boxing, wrestling, horse racing, which, too, have their own large following.

Besides these, in some countries there are also indigenous games which enjoy national recognition.

Coverage of sports events, taking place in different places, within the country and outside, often at the same time, involves high costs, and yet an agency has to do justice to every event that matters from the point of view of its subscribers and their readership.

LATITUDE

Sports coverage, it is believed, gives greater freedom to the agency reporter than other events. This is only partially true. Sports do allow an agency reporter a little latitude, but it is not to be used for writing subjective comments or homilies, but for offering the reader an intelligent interpretation of the situation as it stands at

the end of the day.

Incidentally, interpretation offers some scope of speculation, which should, however, err on the side of caution. But such speculation should be based entirely on facts.

Reporters are sometimes carried away by the performance of sportsmen. If a player has done exceedingly well, he may receive praise in the report, but one should not be too free with superlatives. Effervescence does not add to the merits of a copy. Again, there should be no attempt to denigrate a person.

If a player has not done well, that fact can be mentioned in the course of the description of the proceedings, but nobody should be picked on by an agency reporter for attack.

To win or to lose is part of the game and this is the broader perspective agency copy should reflect.

Tournaments in the international arena generate national rivalries leading to display of patriotic spirit, sometimes bordering on passion. News agency reporters should not allow themselves to be carried away by such sentiments for; in that case, their copy will be biased.

Passions or altercations on the field sometimes lead to ugly scenes. These have to be described without subjective comment.

SPEED

Speed is of the essence in sports coverage. In racing against the clock, the reporter should initially, if necessary on the telephone from the venue, provide a "snap" on the outcome of the event (or the position at the end of the day, as the case may be), and then follow it up with a more detailed account. Snaps are a must for sports reporting. A sports reporter should not wait until the end of an event or game to submit copy. Snaps must be used to keep readers at each turn.

SCORE

Statistics and score are another important aspect of sports reporting. No sports report is complete without the scores. Each game has its own method of detailing scores, and journalists must ensure that the scores they write are presented in conformity with these well-settled styles, in respect to different games.

No amount of care in giving the correct scores is too great, for any discrepancy, in this regard, reflects on the effectiveness of the total report.

The body of the report and the scores must be fully in line and if there is any discrepancy between the two, the scores must be checked again.

Besides the main story, sports events offer side stories and reporters should be watching for them.

8. COURT REPORTING

In general, court stories must:

- 8.1 Be timely, i.e. they must be reported as close to the day(s) of the hearing(s) as possible - preferably the same day;
- 8.2 Not name or give information that will lead to the identification of the accused, minors (under 18 years of age), or victims of crimes, such as rape, incest and sodomy, or those witnesses and others who on the court orders should not be named or identified.
- 8.3 Not apportion blame until judgment is given, i.e. even if the police and the prosecutor says Mr Z killed his wife, we must write "Mr Z is alleged to have killed his wife..."
- 8.4 Not say someone has been charged until they have actually had a charge or charges put to them. This often happens when someone appears in court simply for remand when the reporter should say "Mr Z today appeared in the Oshakati Magistrate Court in connection with the death of his wife..."
Mr XY, appearing for the State, alleged that Mr Z killed his wife..."
Mr Z, who was not asked to plead, was remanded in custody until 23 January after bail was refused..."
- 8.5 Report right up to the conclusion of a case of which an initial report has been made; AND, subject to the restrictions outlined in sub-section above, court stories should generally include:
 - I. Full name(s) of the accused;
 - II. The accused's age (mention whether this is the current age or age at the time of arrest) and if possible, occupation;
 - III. The charge(s), which must be reported in language readily understood by the average reader, and the accused's plea(s) ;
 - IV. Both sides of the case (the prosecution and defence in a criminal case , the plaintiff's and defendant's versions in a civil case, and the appellant's and respondent's argument in an appeal case);
 - V. The judgment (sentence in the case of someone convicted of a criminal offence);
 - VI. In some cases, you may also need to mention that the accused is going to appeal against conviction or sentence or both.

NOTE ALSO that you should report only what is said or promised in court and not write about what you may know or have heard outside the court hearing. Suspects arrested by the police should not be named until they appear in court.

CONTEMPT OF COURT

In relation to freedom of speech and expression, there are three sorts of contempt of court:

- a) One kind of contempt is scandalising the court itself;
- b) There may be likewise a contempt of court in abusing parties who are concerned in cases in the court.
- c) There may also be contempt of court in prejudicing people against persons before the case is heard. But this classification is by no means exhaustive. Broadly speaking, it consists of any conduct that tends to bring the administration of justice into disrespect or to obstruct or interfere with the due course of justice. These three kinds of contempt are known as “criminal contempt” as distinguished from “contempt in procedure” or “civil contempt” which constitutes disobedience to a court order or process, involving a private injury.

Civil contempt means wilful disobedience to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or process of a court or wilful breach of understanding given to a court.

Criminal contempt means the publication (whether through words, spoken or written, or by sign, or by visible representations, or otherwise) of any matter or the doing of any other act whatsoever which;

- i. Scandalises or tends to scandalise or lowers or tends to lower the authority of any court; or
- ii. Prejudices, or interferences or tends to interfere with, the due course of any judicial proceeding;
- iii. Interferes or tends to interfere with, or obstructs or tends to obstruct the administration of justice in any other manner.

It should be pointed out that liability for contempt of court may arise not only from publishing materials in a newspaper, but any other printed matter, e.g. a pamphlet or book.

DEFAMATION

Defamation is injury to a person’s reputation, which is regarded as his property. While insult is an injury to one’s self respect. Defamation is injury to the esteem or regard in which one is held by others. Hence, publication of a defamatory

statement against a person may lead to both civil as well as criminal charges.

The civil law relating to defamation is based on English common law, subject to statutory exceptions.

CIVIL AND CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS FOR DEFAMATION

- a) The object of a civil suit is to compensate the person defamed for their loss or reputation by damages while the object of a criminal prosecution is to punish the person who made the defamatory statement for the offence, by the way of imprisonment or fine or both.
- b) Intention is, in general, irrelevant for civil liability but is essential for criminal proceedings. Hence, though good faith is a defence in criminal law, it is not so except in the case of "qualified privilege" under civil law of defamation.
- c) Truth of defamatory statement is complete defence to a civil action of defamation. But truth is no defence in criminal proceedings unless it becomes necessary to prove that such publication was in the public good.
- d) There are two remedies available in case of defamation which is not alternative but cumulative. The aggrieved person can bring a civil suit before a civil court or complain to a criminal court or pursue both remedies at the same time.

Even where the person has already been convicted in a criminal proceeding or case has been withdrawn, they may still have their remedy in the civil suit. But in awarding damages in such subsequent suit, the court shall take into account any amount which may have been paid to the plaintiff by way of compensation, out of the fine recovered (if any) from the accused in the criminal proceeding.

CONTEMPT AND DEFAMATION

When the alleged contempt consists of scurrilous attacks against a judge, it has to be distinguished from defamation. Although contempt may include defamation, an offence of contempt is something super-added to personal libel, namely that the act of defamation the judge is calculated to obstruct or interfere with due course of justice or proper administration of law. The offence of contempt is really a wrong done to the public by weakening the authority and influence of courts of law which exist for public good.

It may be open to the judge to take steps against the libeller in the ordinary way for vindication of his character and personal dignity as a judge; but such libel may not amount to contempt of court. But when it does amount to contempt of court, a proceeding under the relevant law would not be barred because another remedy may be open to the judge.

9. QUALITATIVE SELECTION

It is obvious that news of interest for home readers is not necessarily so for readers outside a country. News for external consumption has, therefore, to be based on proper selection. One criterion is that it should be of consequence to the sender and of interest to the recipient.

It needs also to be noted that other agencies represent countries with differing social and political systems, covering the entire spectrum of political culture. The reports, therefore, should take note of sensibilities of other continental news agencies and focus on matters of common interest and concern without appearing to philosophise or to indulge in ideological dissertations.

It is more profitable to dwell on one's country's achievements in various fields such as science and technology, medicine, agriculture or industrial production, power production, social welfare, etc.

Various aspects of life in one country with which the local readers are familiar but foreign readers may not necessarily be, have to be explained or elaborated. Sometimes, certain points may have to be back grounded too.

For the service to be effective it is necessary for the staff of a news agency to have a very clear understanding of the political and economic background and the diverse interests of other countries.

The service should be easily intelligible. Knowledge of details, on the part of readers abroad, cannot be taken for granted. Even names well-known in one country may be unfamiliar to readers in another and in every case, therefore, adequate description must be provided.

PART III

ETHICS

What is ethics? Media ethics is a set of principles that govern the reporting on sensitive topics and ways of sourcing information on sensitive topics. These principles protect the right of the individuals you are writing about, but uphold the public's right to know.

It is the responsibility of journalists to be critical of their own work and adhere to ethical principles when reporting on any topics. NAMPA acknowledges this and encourages the further responsibility to deal with such complaints as they arise.

Media Ethics:

- Journalists shall strive to report accurately, fairly and with balance.
- Journalists shall strive to represent the diversity, complexity and plurality of the social reality, and rectify imbalances when reporting on women, children, minorities and under-privileged persons.
- Facts, opinions and audiovisual material on brutality, sadism, scandals, violence, atrocity, drug abuse and obscenity should be presented with due care and sensitivity, even when in public interest. The editorial committee will decide on the exceptions.
- When reporting on crimes or court cases, a journalist shall never disclose the identity of victims of sex crimes without consent or identify a person under the age of 18 when accused of crime. Relatives of an accused person or victim may only be identified when in the public's interest. The editorial committee will decide on what qualifies as an exception.
- A journalist shall not commit plagiarism.
- No reporting shall promote ethnic or religious discord or violence.
- Journalists shall avoid publishing a person's ethnic identity, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability or illness unless these are directly relevant to the story and in the public's interest. Foreign nationals must be identified by their nationality.
- By no means may a journalist use information received before archiving or pass on such information to others for their own profit or that of another.
- Journalists shall at all times use only reasonable means to ascertain the reliability of the contents of any article or audiovisual material.
- NAMPA journalists acknowledge the duty to report accurately and fairly the outcome of an action or defamation to which the press agency has

been a party.

- Journalists should at all times avoid conflict of interest when reporting. Personal gain should never override media freedom, the social responsibility and editorial freedom.
- Journalists shall not make or receive payment offers for stories or information, directly or through agents of any party such as witnesses in criminal cases, convicts or confessed criminals, or their friends and family members.
- Journalists should not accept gifts or freebies where it could compromise professional accountability. Such gifts and freebies should be declared to the editor.
- Journalists shall at times observe confidentiality of sources and the moral obligation to protect sources, unless sources authorise the disclosure of their identity.
- The right to privacy of any person's private life will be respected at all times unless it can be proven that the right to privacy may be overridden by a legitimate public interest.
- By no means may a journalist seek or obtain information or audiovisual material through intimidation and harassment of any person.
- When reporting on a situation of intense grief or shock, a journalist shall at all times approach any source with sympathy and discretion.
- Corrections shall be rectified without reservation or delay and will be done with a reasonable degree of prominence to attract attention.
- Journalists and NAMPA shall respect the right of reply of an aggrieved party to protect their privacy, dignity and reputation, while ensuring the awareness and right to respond, apologise, express regret of error or stand by the story.
- Journalists shall acknowledge the understanding of public interest as but not limited to: detecting or exposing crime and serious misdemeanour; protecting public safety, health or the environment; preventing the public from being misled or falsely informed; exposing misuse of public funds or other forms of corruption by public bodies and exposing hypocritical behaviour by those in high office.
- A journalist's freedom of association is guaranteed by the Namibian Constitution, but they must have due regard for the opinions and views of others. Journalists must exercise strictest discretion when involved in partisan activities lest they obscure their objectivity and professional balance in their work as journalists.

PART IV

SOCIAL MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT

1. NAMPA PRESENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

This platform will carry only selected news clips on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and any other platform deemed suitable.

Journalists and staff members may not reply to responses on social media. Only the administrator may do so.

Regional offices may open their independent social media accounts but permission must be sought and granted from the editorial desk in Windhoek.

When publishing news breaks on social media, journalists must first have reported the newsbreak to the editor's desk and have filed a report for the agency's purpose.

A reporter shall not share any content on their personal sites unless it is first published on the NAMPA social platform.

The editorial desk must be notified immediately of erroneous content. Comments on errors from the audience must be verified by the administrator and replied with a "thank you" email.

2. JOURNALISTS' CONDUCT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Nampa encourages journalists to use social media. Social media plays a very important part in sourcing information, building contacts and involving the audience in media production.

Journalists are expected to understand that the people they interact with are potential sources of news.

Journalists must at all times respect and protect the independence, impartiality and credibility of NAMPA.

Journalists and staff members must refrain from commenting on content criticism in the heat of the moment.

Journalists are encouraged to use social media as a way of protecting the credibility and quality of the agency.

When using social media in the capacity of an agency employee, journalists must make it clear and be easily identified as such.

Journalists may have a private and an agency employee account on social media. This must be authorised by the editorial desk first. The private account should make no reference to the agency.

Journalists must clearly state their position and role at the agency when creating an agency employee account.

Journalists must have a disclaimer on their agency employee account on which it is clearly stated that any views expressed on that profile are those of the individual and not of the agency. The disclaimer should read as follows:

“The views expressed here are my own. Links, posts, shares, likes, dislikes and re-tweets are not necessarily endorsed by NAMPA. The views and opinions shared here may be used for news story production.”

When using social media as either a private person or agency employee, journalists must adhere to the agency’s code of ethics presented in the style guide.

The agency has the right to keep a list of and monitor all professional social media accounts of staff members.

Journalists may not include political affiliations in their social media accounts or make any postings of their political views thereon.

Talking bad about other employees or the agency’s mode of operation is prohibited.

Posts aimed at gathering views and opinions of the audience on behalf of the agency or privately must make it clear and that these views or opinions may be used in news production.

It is acceptable to accept associations and friend requests from sources, politicians and newsmakers if necessary for reporting purposes.

Journalists and staff members are encouraged to make associations with parties reflecting all sides of a political or controversial issue.

Avoid commenting on highly sensitive, divisive or controversial posts.

Staff may not post and share the media content on their professional and private social networks unless they obtain permission to do so.

Staff and journalists may not publish any content or information on social media that could jeopardise the safety and security of agency staff.

Journalists must verify the authenticity of sources on social media through the editorial desk. Fake accounts are very common on social media, particularly when a person or organisation is central to a developing story. Use your journalistic instinct as well.

Using the social media pages as sources of text or audiovisual content is inadequate. A journalist must establish contact with the administrator of the social media page, via email or telephone, before publishing content through the agency’s portal.

