

Beats

Reporters use audio, video, and photography to tell stories

- A reporter's job is to not only tell what happened, but how to get involved.
- Eyes and ears of community.
- **Types of Beats**
 - Local Government
 - Police
 - Business
 - Sports
 - Cultural
 - Religious
- **Principles for Reporters on a Beat**
 - Be prepared
 - The best education for a journalist is a broad-based one, providing exposure to the widest possible sampling of human knowledge.

- Use the internet for background and context.
- Become familiar with laws governing institutions.
- Look at state's open-meeting laws.
- Read for background
 - Make notes of what appear to be continuing issues.
- Talking to sources
 - Talk to predecessor on the beat – city editor and veterans in the news room for background.
 - Understand your editor's expectations.
 - Establish a relationship with sources—demonstrate interest in them.
- Be alert
 - Many public officials and public employees think they know more about what is good for the public than the public does. You carry a

heavy responsibility for helping your readers to put the theory of democratic government into practice:

- Who will benefit from this, and who will be hurt?
 - How important is this?
 - Who is for this, and who is against it?
 - How much will this activity cost, and who will pay?
- Be persistent
- Insist on a responsive answer:
 - Your job is to cut through the jargon and the evasions in search of substance.
 - “It sounds to me as if you’re saying . . .”
 - Keep coming back to the point.
 - Does that make sense to me?

- Can I make it clear to my readers?
- Don't quit until the answer is **yes**
- Follow up on developments - start a file of reminders so you won't forget (tickler).
- Be there
 - In beat reporting, there is no substitute for personal contact.
- Don't expect officials to explain the basics of their business.
 - Do a favor when you can.
 - Don't shun good news.
 - Protect your sources.
 - Above all, be accurate.
 - Be wary:
 - All sources have points of view. It is likely and legitimate that they will try to persuade you of the merit of their viewpoint. Be

wary of sources' efforts to use you.

- Online coverage

- With cell phones, digital cameras and laptop computers, reporters can and do file short stories and even photographs for posting on the Web site as the story unfolds.

- Online, you're expected to gather and present to readers more information, more detail and more points of view than either print or broadcast permits. Readers want *and expect* links to other Web sites that offer related information or further background.

- Interactivity

- Covering local beats

- Information is power.

- Find the person who knows in detail how and organization really works, where the money

goes and how decisions are made. Get to know them.

- Power: Information is power.
- Money: the budget is the blueprint.
- Politics: distributing power and money is politics:
 - Subordinate administrators
 - Council members
 - Pressure groups
 - Public citizens
 - Opponents
- Schools
 - Subscribe to trade newsletters and magazines.
 - Remember the most important part of the beat—what goes on in the classroom.
 - Understand what standard test scores mean.

- Get to know teachers, administrators and students.