

Introduction to News Reporting

JOU-110-TE

This TECEP® exam places emphasis on writing the story, familiarity with reporting terminology and procedures, awareness of legal and ethical issues, as well as the role played by social media and citizen journalism on news reporting. (3 s.h.)

- **Test format:** 10 definitions (1 point each); 3 short-answer questions on legal and ethical issues (5 points each); 3 short-answer questions on social media and citizen journalism (5 points each); 3 news stories written from the information you are provided (20 points each)
- **Passing score:** 65% (65/100 points). Your grade will be reported as CR (credit) or NC (no credit).
- **Time limit:** 3 hours

Topics on the test and their approximate distribution

1. **Writing the story** (60%)
2. **Reporting terminology and procedures** (10%)
3. **Legal and ethical issues** (15%)
4. **Social Media and Citizen Journalism** (15%)

Study materials

Any of the texts below will prepare you, but many college-level texts and open educational resources in this subject can help you prepare. The important thing is to make sure you are knowledgeable about the information by comparing your study materials to the topic outline, to make sure everything is covered.

Brooks, Brian S. et al. *News Reporting and Writing*.
New York: Bedford/St. Martin's. Current edition.

Mencher, Melvin. *Melvin Mencher's News Reporting and Writing*.
New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education. Current edition.

Rich, Carole. *Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method*.
Boston: Wadsworth/Cengage. Current edition.

Outcomes assessed on the test

- Demonstrate an ability to write in a variety of journalistic styles.
- Write a basic news story for print and broadcast, using journalistic style and concise language.
- Generate a summary lead.
- Integrate and attribute source material into news stories.
- Describe the legal and ethical principles that guide responsible media coverage.
- Explain the influence of social media in today's world and how it affects journalism.
- Demonstrate proper grammar, punctuation, usage and copyediting skills.

Sample questions

Definitions

1. Define "feature."
2. Define "stringer."
3. Define "on the record."
4. Define "follow-up question."
5. Define "cutline."

Legal/Ethical Issues

6. Should a reporter socialize with sources?
7. What particular care must be taken in writing an accident story?

Social Media/Citizen Journalism

8. A police officer stops at the scene of a car accident, gets into an altercation with the driver, and a passer-by captures the altercation on cell phone video. The video is posted on social media and goes viral. What is a possible problem with this situation?

Each short answer question will be scored as follows:

- Understanding the concept: 3 points
- Providing an accurate explanation: 2 points

News Stories

You will be asked to write three stories of approximately 200 words each from information you will be given. The stories will be chosen from three of the following four topics:

- a town meeting
- a feature
- a fire
- a weather story

Each story is worth 20 points, distributed as follows:

- Getting an appropriate lead, organization according to significance of detail, and accuracy: 12 points
- Mechanics, following conventions specific to type of story, consistency of style, and spelling: 8 points

Following is a weather story fact sheet. The information in it is comparable to the kind of information you will be given in the test. Compare the information in the fact sheet to the full sample story at the end, so you understand what will be required. Correct any errors of spelling and style.

Fact sheet

Reporter's Notes:

Wednesday, 12 January: Cleveland snow fall measured 26 inches.

Monday 1/10 city received six inches

Tuesday 1/11 city received another 12 inches

Wednesday 1/12 city received another 8 inches

2300 customers without electricity

weight of snow caused collapse of many power lines

shelters set up at all city schools

snow emergency number: 555-5555

local grocery stores running low on food – especially bread and milk

hardware stores are out of shovels and snow blowers

main roads passable / side street not

schools and non-emergency government offices closed since Monday afternoon

According to Councilman Tom Gregson, "Where possible, most schools and offices will open Friday."

Quotes:

Anthony Melendez, snow removal truck driver: "We started plowing Monday, but as soon as we plowed a street, it filled up with snow again. There's so much snow we have nowhere on land to dump it. We're dumping it in Lake Erie."

Sgt. John Smithers, Cleveland police: “We’re transporting those without electricity who request it to shelters. The school shelters have electricity, a supply of food, and cots. I, myself, have moved six families.”

Councilman Tom Gregson: “Despite the difficulties, everything is under control, thanks to the police and fire departments.”

Answers to sample questions

1. A soft news story that expands and enlightens the news
2. A part-time employee of a publication
3. When the person making the statement is willing to be identified, by name and by title, as the source of the quote and/or information attributed to him or her
4. A question designed to elicit more information from a source
5. A photo caption; something which explains or describes the picture
6. Some journalists say good stories can be found at parties, when people are drinking and talking freely. But the majority seem to think reporters will become too friendly with sources with whom they socialize and that it is unethical to use information gathered from people who are drinking.
7. Do not imply blame, unless someone has been charged. Otherwise, you are open to a libel suit. Also, be careful not to invade peoples’ privacy by publishing information about a private citizen which the public does not need to know and which that citizen may be sensitive about — e.g., the gory details of a child’s injury, unless the public really needs to know those details.
8. This might be a problem if the entire altercation was not captured on video and audio. If only a portion of it was captured and went viral, it could be misconstrued because the whole story was not included.

Sample Weather Story

CLEVELAND BURIED IN SNOW

CLEVELAND, Jan. 12 – For the past three days it has been snowing here. The city is buried under 26 inches of snow.

Monday snowfall measured six inches, Tuesday, 18 inches, and today 26 inches.

Approximately 2300 customers are without electricity because of collapsed power lines. Main roads are passable, but side streets are not. Grocery stores are running low on food, especially bread and milk. Hardware stores are out of shovels and snow blowers.

“Despite the difficulties, everything is under control, thanks to the police and fire departments,” said Councilman Tom Gregson.

Shelters have been set up at all city schools for those without electricity. The shelters have a supply of food, as well as several cots.

For those who want to be transported to shelters, the snow emergency number is 555-5555.

Sgt. John Smithers, of the Cleveland police, said that families are being transported already. “I, myself, have moved six families,” said Smithers.

Snow removal crews have been working round the clock since Monday afternoon.

According to Anthony Melendez, snow truck removal driver, “We started plowing Monday, but as soon as we plowed a street, it filled up with snow again. There’s so much snow we have nowhere on land to dump it. We’re dumping it in Lake Erie.”

Schools and non-emergency government offices have been closed since Monday afternoon. It is anticipated that most will re-open Friday, said Gregson.