

FOX CT Student News Story Guidelines

- Choose a compelling story
- Tell the story through the eyes of the people involved (central character)
- Strong opening with strong visuals
- Strong writing with short, declarative sentences free of clichés
- Stand ups - make sure they are appropriate and drive the story
- Voice Over delivered with interest and authority
- Camera work steady with good composition free of pans and zooms
- Lighting - make sure viewer can see what you are shooting
- Sound Quality - clean with appropriate use of natural sound
- Editing - good pacing with matched sequences
- Build story to strong close
- Make it interesting
- You can use your own lower third graphics for interview subjects. Do NOT use any logos.
- No longer than 90 Seconds

The Shoot

1. Be on time, or be early.
2. Check in with your contact and introduce yourself.
3. **USE A TRIPOD**
4. If possible, do your interviews first. This will give you the info you need to write the VO for your story. This info will also help you get all the B-roll (cover shots) you'll need.
5. **USE A TRIPOD.**
6. Do your B-roll in an orderly fashion (3 shots for every one shot you think you need.) And keep quiet while you're shooting in case you want to use the NAT SOT.
7. **USE A TRIPOD.**
8. Pick a nice place to do your stand up and watch your framing and lighting.
9. Do both a bridge and a close so you'll have a choice when you're editing. Make the stand ups short. Do them several times. Always USE A TRIPOD for this. Hold still for at least 5 seconds before and after the stand up. And it wouldn't kill you to begin with "3,2,1, pause," then say your lines.
10. If you're at an event, pick up any printed materials offered (press releases, brochures, fact sheets). Get statistics and sources if appropriate. Get a phone number to call if you need more information after the event.
11. Get correct names, dates, locations, and titles. Spelling counts.



Viewing Raw Tapes

1. Watch and log your tapes at the same time. This saves time.
2. Listen to your sound bites and write them down word-for-word.
3. Time the sound bites you might use EXACTLY to the second. Write the times on the log sheet next to the SOT.
4. Mark the great shots as you log so they'll be easy to find when you start editing.
5. Be mindful of the 90 second rule.

Most Frequent Mistakes

1. Always adhere to the 90 second rule!
2. Never start a story with a stand-up.
3. Only do one stand-up in the story...in the middle or at the end.
4. If a stand-up is at the end, then we need a wrap-up sentence before the reporter tags out.
5. Never say "signing off". You are not "live", you are on tape.

- EDITING
- Lay down the first shot of audio/video with natural sound up full.
- Then, lay down the reporter's voice over until the first interview - Audio ch. 1.
- Then lay down the interview WITH INTERVIEWEE'S VIDEO- Audio ch. 1
- Then lay down more of the reporter's voice over - Audio ch. 1
- If there is natural sound (nat sot) then lay it down with it's video - Audio Ch. 2
- Then lay down more of the reporter's voice over - Audio ch. 1
- Then lay down the reporter's stand-up.
- Take the video and the audio - Audio Ch. 1
- Let the last shot of the reporter run for 5 more seconds past their last word. This is ending video/audio pad. That means the reporter must stand still for at least 10 seconds after they finish their last word.
- Once all the audio tracks are laid down seconds, then go back and insert edit all the pictures that match the words - these are your cover shots.
- Be sure that when a person being interviewed is on-camera we actually see them. That is why we want to take their audio and video when we lay down the audio track first.
- 7. Use a tripod ALL the time. Never shoot off the shoulder.

Pick other stories. Everyone should not do the same story.

Running a School Program and Motivating Your Students Helpful tips come from teacher Kerry Hrabstock

Classroom Basics

Q. How do we start?

A. Believe it or not some of the students have never watched a real news story on a local news station. Even if they have they certainly haven't dissected it. Have them do that or do it with them in class on the board. Great way to pick out who, what, where, why, when, and how. Also, good way to illustrate the way video matches up with the writing and how to use sound benefits a story.

Q. So now they're ready to go out on a story?

A. First we do fake news stories. They must use VO, SOTs, NAT SOT and a Stand Up.

Q. It has been production chaos. Now what?

A. Take back control, sit them down and get out the Fox CT Student News manuals, one for each student. Use the board for examples, definitions, whatever. Assign pages to study for homework. Quiz, quiz, quiz. If you need to fill class time with more stuff, show more examples of stories from real news shows as well as good Student News stories. Dissect them and list the good and bad points on the board.

Q. How do we find a good story?

A. Let's face it, these kids will not be covering hard breaking news stories. The stories are generally "evergreen" features. Show them some features in newspapers and magazines and ask them to show some to you. Make sure they know the kind of stories that will be possible for them to submit. Ask them what might be interesting events happening in the school community that might have some interesting features.

Q. How do we set up the story?

A. I (the teacher) usually make the first phone call to tell the subject that if he agrees to a story, he'll be dealing with students. After that, the student and I go over what needs to be accomplished in his (the student's) initial phone call. It usually comes down to making an appointment and asking what will be going on at the time we are there.

Q. How do we use class time to prepare?

A. We brainstorm. We talk about what we perceive the subject and story will be like. These perceptions are as varied as the students. I tell them horror stories of past events so they know not all will go as planned. We use the board to write down words and phrases we think we might use in our VO. Alliteration, catch phrases, puns, rhymes, etc.



LET'S DO ONE OF OUR "PRETEND" STORIES

- Brainstorm before we read the fact sheet
- Look at fact sheet
- Choose SOT and time them
- Close or Bridge? Where? What? Cut the tag out as much as possible. Do not say the photographer's name. That's not how it is in the real world. On a close, do a short wrap up sentence then "In Hartford Joe Schmoe reporting."
- Let's write it
- Let's time the VO
- Let's whittle it down to less than 90 seconds

Q. Do we write down our interview questions?

A. Not necessarily. Some students (you know the ones) need to write them down and read them to the subject. Other students are capable of conversing. Either way, make sure no one goes after YES or NO answer questions. Role play in class. How to get timid subjects to talk and elaborate.

SHOOTING GOOD VIDEO

If you have time, shooting exercises help tremendously.

Perspectives:

- Three shots for every one shot you think you need (basic sequence).
- Look at the viewfinder not through it.
- Use the tic, tac, toe grid. (Rule of thirds both horizontal and vertical).
- Don't shoot the stage. Get on the stage and shoot.
- Always get B-roll of the person you are interviewing. B-roll must not be a head shot. It should be video of them doing something.