

Worksheet 1.4

News values

Match the news value terms to their definitions in the following table. If time allows, attempt to think of news stories you can recollect that might contain each of these characteristics – many stories will contain several.

News value	Definition
Immediacy	Is the story sufficiently large? Does it involve or affect a large enough number of people to warrant its inclusion in the national news?
Familiarity	Far from always being new, some news coverage is really quite easy to predict – important events that crop up every year or mark an occasion when important statements are made or speeches given. Another aspect of the predictability of news is the fact that many stories and events are floated long in advance to those in the news so that they can 'get it in the news diary'. Public relations are behind a lot of news stories and clearly the timing of these stories is carefully scheduled in advance.
Amplitude	Of course many news stories are the opposite – unexpected and unpredicted. They may contain scandal or sudden hardship to the community.
Frequency	Stories about famous, rich, powerful people and countries often dominate the news schedules. When did you last read anything about Burkina Faso?
Predictable	This is the stuff of drama – and a newspaper or broadcast without this element would be dull indeed. Without people, communities or even countries at loggerheads, newspapers and news bulletins would have very little to cover. Politics is all about managing scarce resources, deciding how to share them out, so this element is a key part of all stories about Government policies.
Surprise	Bad news.
Continuity	A key way of making stories about big topics seem more understandable or relevant is to feature a single person or a few people affected by the event. This gives it a human face and creates what's known as 'human interest'.
Elite nations and elite people	Has the event happened recently, if not on the same day of the broadcast? Is it breaking news?
Personalisation	According to broadcasting standards, there is an obligation on TV news programmes to be as fair as possible, offering both sides in a conflict a voice. At the same time, this quality may be supplied by varying the contents of the programme overall so that difficult stories are offset by lighter ones.
Conflict	Is the event a regular happening – one that crops up almost every year?
Negativity	If the story links to a theme that has already been defined as news – featuring in newspapers and TV bulletins – then it may well make the news itself.
Balance	Is the story one that will be immediately understandable by the home nation's audience – reflecting its culture, calendar, customs and habits?

These definitions are derived from the elements of news identified by Galtung and Ruge; Jeremy Tunstall and Dennis McShane (see *Teaching TV News* by Eileen Lewis – bfi Education 2003)