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How to Analyze the News

COPS Strategy Develops Literacy About What is Reported in the Media

Apr 15, 2009 [Suzanne Pitner](#)



Newspaper - Montevideo
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Use the COPS strategy to become literate about news media and to distinguish what is accurately reported and what is not.



Journalists strive for objectivity and balance in reporting, yet bias can still be found. Using an analysis strategy with the acronym COPS can help develop a more complete picture of news events and develop the ability to be discerning about the news.

COPS stands for:

C – Context

O – Opinion

P – Perspective

S - Sources

C – Context: Put the News in Context

News and information are often confused as being one and the same. However, news reports events that will interest or entertain readers. Information gives background facts about the news that puts it in context. News entertains; information is something readers can use.

Read on

[What is Media Literacy?](#)

Living in a media rich environment requires people to become savvy about media. Media literacy enables them to be perceptive consumers of media messages.

For example, a news story about a celebrity beating up his girlfriend is news. Information about the rates of domestic violence, ways to prevent it, and what to do when encountering domestic violence, is information that can put the news story into context.

Another example is a news story about a polluted water source. Information related to that article would include the type of pollution, how that particular type of pollution affects environmental health, and an examination of how to clean it up and prevent future occurrences.

Due to time constraints, television reporting provides little information with news. Viewers must be willing to read further to find the information that puts television

news in context.

O – Opinion: Separate Opinions From Facts

Many articles present opinions in a way that makes them appear to be facts. Opinions can be views based on emotion, anecdotal evidence, personal experience, or even hearsay. However, to be valid for decision-making, an opinion must be soundly based in fact, statistics, and evidence that is used in a well-thought out, logical manner. When an opinion is presented in an article or on the op-ed page, readers should ask what the basis is for the opinion before accepting it as valid.

P – Perspective: Look at the News Perspective

What is presented as news in today's publishing venues is dependent upon many variables. One variable is other events of the day. Happenings considered more newsworthy can overshadow or even eliminate other news stories.

Another variable is advertising influence. News that promotes or at the very least, doesn't offend major advertisers will be presented first.

Last, time and space constraints will determine which stories get the most coverage, and which stories are edited down or even shelved. These are some of the ways that [news bias](#) can be found in today's reports.

S – Sources: Read Widely From Several Sources

To find information related to news, it's important to read or view several sources. If a reader gets information from a conservative magazine, then it would also be wise to read a more liberal magazine to get other sides of the issue. Reading widely allows a person to be exposed to many views and many differing interpretations of what is happening in the world.

Information overload is a problem in today's society, but avoiding the news will lead to misinformed ideas and allow the consumer to fall prey to [news bias](#). Reading news from several sources gives more information. More information allows the reader to distinguish accurate facts. With accurate facts, people can make informed decisions about things that affect them.

To be literate about the news today, consumers must realize that news is filtered based on many different goals of the reporting agencies. Using the COPS strategy to find the information that puts the news in context, separate fact from opinion, look for the news perspective, and read wide ranging sources of news, will help readers become better informed, knowledgeable, and literate consumers of the media.

[Understanding Television Media Reporting](#) explains how to evaluate news broadcasts on television and streaming video.

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