



Covering an event

Steve Stewart
February 2010



Before the event

- Be prepared.
 - Why is the event being held?
 - Get an agenda.
 - Study background information.
- Arrive on time, and size up circumstances.



Taking notes

- Use speakers' key words and phrases, even when you're not taking direct quotations.
- Listen for good quotations.
 - Get them verbatim.
 - Put them in quotation marks in your notes.
- Understand the context, and pass it on to readers.



Using a recorder

- Only as backup: you still need good notes!
- Use counter or timer to keep track.
- Watch for body language and actions that aren't recorded with the sound.



Watch the audience

- Number of people
- Reactions
 - Body language
 - Questions
 - Comments
 - What interests the people listening? It may also interest your readers.



Meetings

- Many are routine, but can provide tips and background.
- Some are business meetings where action is taken; some are only discussions.
- Sometimes the discussions prove most newsworthy.
- Look for information that will help readers know what to expect.



News conferences

- The speaker has a purpose, which may be self-serving. Your purpose is to inform your readers.
- Listen to others' questions and answers.
- Ask your own questions.
- Ask follow-up questions: Pin down specific answers.



Hang around afterward

- Observe.
- Ask questions.
 - Additional facts
 - Unanswered questions
 - Clarification
- Beat the competition: Make your story unique.



Flesh out the story

- Get people's reactions, especially if they've been accused.
- Verify facts.
- Add perspective.



Writing the story

- Your lede should focus on what was said and done, not the fact that the event was held or what the topic was.
- Think: What would I blurt out to a friend about this event?
- Ask and answer the question: What does my reader want to know or need to know?



Writing the story

- Write about substance, not process (you're not writing minutes).
- Write more than one story if warranted.
- You can write a story summarizing various actions and discussions, maybe using bullets.
- (For this assignment, just write one good story. It need not cover everything that took place at the event.)