

One Page: Reporting for Online

Step 1: Do Your Work

The Internet doesn't make it easier to be an amateur reporter, which makes it tougher to be a professional reporter. One of your readers is probably blogging about any easily observable event. All of your readers can easily double-check your work. So good, ol' fashioned original legwork is now more important than ever.

Step 2: Show Your Work

Start asking for all your documents in digital format and start recording audio of all your interviews. Post all of them along with your story.

Step 3: Talk to Your Readers

Ask them what **you** don't know. Ask them what **they** don't know.

Step 4: Practice Sustainable Journalism

Recycle your background material by creating standing online resources that you can use as links in other stories and that your readers can find when they want it.

Look for the most frequent words in your stories – especially proper nouns – and write three quick facts about each.

Step 5: Prepare for Breaking News

- Have a staffing plan.
- Learn how to record audio and video in a pinch. Know how long it takes to edit.
- Blog. But don't forget to recap.
- Work in Takes: Fast First. Rich Second.
- Be ready to take information from audience.
- Tell your readers what you don't yet know.

Step 6: Data-driven Journalism

1. Make a list of all the nouns on your beat.
2. Make a list of their attributes.
3. Identify the sources where you can obtain information about their attributes and their values.

*By Ryan Thornburg, Assistant Professor
School of Journalism and Mass Communication
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
May 9, 2008
ryan.thornburg@unc.edu
919-962-4080*