

Understanding News Values

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Why some events become news and others don't

1. Definition

News values (also called news criteria or news factors) are the characteristics that journalists use to decide whether a story is newsworthy and how prominently it should be placed in a news outlet.

2. Classic News Values (Traditional Print & Broadcast)

Value	What It Means	Typical Questions
Timeliness / Currency	How recent the event is.	<i>Did it happen today or just now?</i>
Proximity	Physical or cultural closeness to the audience.	<i>Is it happening near the readers/viewers?</i>
Impact / Consequence	The size of the effect on people's lives.	<i>How many people are affected?</i>
Prominence / Celebrity	Involvement of well-known individuals or institutions.	<i>Who is involved?</i>
Conflict / Controversy	Presence of disagreement, clash, or tension.	<i>Is there a fight, dispute, or scandal?</i>
Human Interest	Emotional, personal, or unusual aspects that attract empathy.	<i>Will it make people feel something?</i>
Novelty / Oddity	Unusual, surprising, or bizarre elements.	<i>Is this story out of the ordinary?</i>
Currency / Relevance	Alignment with ongoing themes or public debates.	<i>Does it tie into a larger issue?</i>
Magnitude / Scale	Size or scope of the event (e.g., natural disaster, mass protest).	<i>How big is the event?</i>
Authority / Official Source	Information coming from credible, authoritative sources.	<i>Is there an official statement or data?</i>

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Note: Not every story must satisfy all values; the stronger the combination, the higher the newsworthiness.

3. Modern Extensions & Digital?Era Factors

New Factor	Why It Matters	Example
Shareability / Virality	Content that prompts clicks, shares, and comments drives traffic.	A short, witty video that trends on TikTok.
Algorithmic Fit	Platforms prioritize stories that match user behavior patterns.	A local sports highlight that matches a user's past viewing.
Interactive Potential	Stories that can be explored via polls, quizzes, or AR.	A live?map of a hurricane's path with user?submitted photos.
Data?Driven Insight	Use of big data to reveal patterns or anomalies.	Visualization of COVID?19 vaccination rates by zip code.
Community Relevance	Hyper?local focus on neighborhoods or niche groups.	A city council decision on a bike lane affecting a specific district.
Ethical Transparency	Disclosure of sources, corrections, and bias mitigation.	A fact?checked article with a visible methodology box.

4. Decision?Making Process (Typical Newsroom Flow)

1. Idea Generation

- Pitch, tip, press release, social?media trend, wire service alert.

2. Initial Screening (News Values Check)

- Apply the values checklist; assign a provisional "newsworthiness score."

3. Assignment & Research

- Reporter assigned; gather facts, interview sources, verify data.

4. Editorial Review

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- Editors re-evaluate values, consider audience, space, and legal risk.

5. Production & Placement

- Story written/produced; headline reflects strongest values (e.g.,