



News Judgment

Trying to define what constitutes news is a delicate business. Some of the key factors include:

- **Impact:** Is the only factory in town closing down? That has a bigger impact than two people being laid off, so it's bigger news. A disaster is big news because of its impact, leaving people hurt and homeless.
- **Conflict:** A demonstration for animal rights in which people peacefully march and chant slogans is not a major news story. But if a confrontation develops between the protesters and a fur coat merchant, and someone gets hurt, it becomes a major story because the level of conflict has increased.
- **Prominence:** Are celebrities or politicians involved in a story? If so, it's a bigger story. A failed marriage in the Royal Family is a big headline around the world, but the same problems, if they happened to your next-door neighbour, wouldn't even make the local paper.
- **Proximity:** If your newspaper is in Timmins, Ontario, and a homeless person freezes to death on Timmins' main street one winter night, that's big news. But if your newspaper is in Whitehorse, Yukon, you are not as interested in a death in Timmins, because it isn't close to your readers.
- **Freshness:** News has a short shelf life. If a development happened an hour before the paper's deadline, it's bigger news than if it's 24 hours old.
- **Novelty:** There's a saying that "if a dog bites a man it isn't news, but if a man bites a dog, that's news." Human interest: Related to novelty. Stories about the 96-year-old who swims in the ocean every morning, winter and summer, or about the family with 20 foster children and how they cope, are of interest to readers.

These factors are all a part of news judgment.

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