



NEWSHOUR

A NewsHour with Jim Lehrer special for students

EXTRA

## LESSON PLAN: BE the Press: Local Interviews, National Issues

### Handout #3

#### Basic Reporting Principles:

- Identify yourself clearly and your assignment. If you are not a reporter and this is an academic assignment, you must explain that and not present yourself as a professional or student reporter. However, you are obliged to follow regular interviewing and reporting procedures.
- Writers must use clear, solid writing without lots of extraneous wording (remember, most reporters are still given a word limit for their articles)
- Writers must remove themselves and their opinion from their writing.
  - No use of “I”
  - No appearance of the reporter’s opinion on the issue
  - Writers don’t participate in what they are reporting or alter the situation in any way.
- Writers should take written notes during all interviews. Don’t rely solely on a tape recorder!
- Writers must adhere to their notes and actual quotes; don’t make up quotes or notes!
- Ask before you tape record in an interview or make sure your source understands or realizes that he/she is being recorded.
- If an interview is going wonderfully and you are getting behind taking notes, do the best you can. As soon as you exit the interview, sit down with your paper and pen and write down everything you can remember. While you probably won’t recapture direct quotes, you can capture other important details this way.
- Don’t hesitate to ask someone to repeat themselves to allow you to get their direct quote correct.
- Don’t let interviewees read your notes. You may reread their direct quotes back to them, but resist any urges they may have to change their direct quotes after the fact.
- Write so that an audience of sixth graders can understand what you’re saying.
- Define any unusual terms you use in your writing.