



Writing, Editing, and Journalism Industry Resource Guide

Background: The field of writing, editing, and journalism is very broad and encompasses everything from freelance writing to production of television documentaries. Journalists report on current affairs and other events for publications in print and electronic media, or for broadcast on radio or television. Reporters are sensitive to news of breaking events, often observing such events, examining documents, interviewing people, and writing stories to be submitted electronically. At a state prior to publication, news writers may re-write/edit the information submitted by reporters.

News reporters may specialize in fields such as politics, foreign affairs, business, arts, sports, health, or science. Increasingly, the work is being done by news teams encompassing reporters, editors, photographers, and graphic artists.

Reporters on morning papers may often work from late afternoon to midnight. Those on afternoon or evening papers may work from early morning to mid-afternoon. Long hours and irregular schedules can be a part of the job. In contrast, reporters and writers on magazines work regular daytime hours. Different sub-fields will have various schedules as well as job-specific tasks. A foreign correspondent, for example, may be required to travel (or relocate) more often than a local business reporter.

Writers may work in journalism or they may utilize their skills in a wide-range of other jobs such as fiction or non-fiction authors, technical writers, social media and web content developers, script writers, digital producers, proposal developers, and many, many other areas. The written word is a powerful tool and writers are central to telling a story that will resonate with their intended audiences.

Career Pathways and Lifestyle: There are many pathways of entry into this career field and success, in many cases, is dependent on connections, a strong portfolio of work, and some degree of luck. If working for an organization, one might find themselves working for an established media or publishing company or a start-up web or social media company. Others may be self-employed or work on a contract basis related to specific projects for clients or organizations. Typically, adherence to deadlines is critical to success in this field, especially in journalism where you are trying to compete with others to report or provide information to audiences before others do.

The field is also known for its wide salary band. Depending on the type of position you seek and the type of employer you work for, salaries can vary widely from as low as \$20,000 to as much as \$1M+ (for a handful of exclusive positions) in full-time roles. Contract writers and editors typically are paid on a per-project or per-hour basis.

Points of Entry Into The Field: Many aspiring writers, editors, and journalist gain practical experience through university newspapers, radio stations, television stations, or internships where they can showcase their talents and attempt to gain mainstream publication or broadcast of their work. Many people enter the profession through an internship or competitive hire by leading companies.

Relevant Sample Areas of Specialization within Writing, Editing, and Journalism:

- Fiction/Non-Fiction Author
- Producer/Digital Producer
- Social Media Contributor
- Correspondent
- Print or Digital Reporter
- Copy/Line Editors
- Editor or Publisher
- Broadcast Journalist
- Production Assistant
- Content Developer
- Technical Writer
- Radio Personality

What Employers Want: Those interested in the field should possess impeccable command of the English language. Precise word choice, concise thoughts and strong grammar are indispensable for journalistic writing, whether for the eye or the ear. Knowledge of a foreign language is helpful, especially when reporting on events internationally. Those aspiring to become broadcasters should also have interesting intonation, accurate pronunciation, varied expression, and a professional appearance. The following skills are also desirable:

- Excellent Written and Oral Communication Skills
- Strong Research Skills
- Attention to Detail and Deadlines
- Strong Interpersonal Skills
- Ability to Work with Differing Personalities
- A Knack for Storytelling
- Adaptability to Change and Circumstances
- Ethical and Moral Compass
- Subject-Matter Expertise
- Resourcefulness

Considering A Career in Writing, Editing, or Journalism? Students most likely to successfully break into journalism are those with both internship experiences at professional publications and leadership experience at campus publications. Experience is crucial not only because it creates an opportunity to demonstrate skills in reporting and writing, but also for networking. Campus publications and smaller media outlets typically offer the most hands-on experience, while work at larger publications offer better networking opportunities. Most employers are looking for a combination of both.¹ It is important to remember that good writing samples (“clips”) at a small publication are far more valuable than bad clips at a large one. In broadcast news, local news affiliates are the doorway to national news networks. While most internships in television and radio are unpaid, interns often emerge with professionally produced demo tapes which are invaluable.

If you’re considering consulting as a career field, attend local events on-campus conduct an informational interview with a JHU alumnus in the field, or review the information from one of the professional associations listed below.

Leading Firms

The BBC – www.bbc.co.uk

Discovery Communications
www.discovery.com

National Geographic
www.nationalgeographic.com

National Public Radio
www.npr.org

TimeWarner
www.timewarner.com

Public Broadcasting Service
www.pbs.org

ClearChannel Worldwide – www.clearchannel.com

Gannett
www.gannett.com

NBC Universal
www.nbc.com

The New York Times Company
www.nytc.com

The Washington Post Company
www.washpost.com

News Corporation
www.newscorp.com

Professional Associations: Each industry field has at least one (but many times several) professional associations that serve professionals (including students) in that field. Many provide research on trends, access to job boards, and options to learn new skills through webinars, annual conferences, and industry publications (journals, newsletters, etc.).

A Sampling of Professional Associations in the

Industry: American Booksellers Association
American Society of Newspaper Editors
National Association of Broadcasters
Society of Professional Journalists

Association of American University Presses
The Associated Press
National Press Club
Society of American Business Editors and Writers, Inc.

