



Journalism

Scouts BSA · Arts

Name

Started

Completed

Journalism is about finding out what's really happening and telling it clearly and fairly. You'll learn why a free press matters, practice asking good questions, and report on a real event. These skills help with school papers, speeches, and just being a sharp reader of the news.

Requirements

Every official requirement, in plain language. Check the official wording when you sign off (scouting.org/merit-badges/journalism/). Tips and examples are ideas, not extra requirements.

- ☐ **1** Explain freedom of the press and how the First Amendment protects your right to speak out. Tell how to tell fact from opinion; explain malice, privacy, public figure, fair comment and criticism, libel, slander, and defamation; and discuss how they relate to journalism ethics

Tip: Read the First Amendment out loud, then think of a recent news story that shows why reporters need to be free to ask hard questions.

Example: Read the First Amendment, then explain it with a real example: a local reporter asks the mayor why a park closed. Freedom of the press means the government can't stop that story from running, even if officials don't like it.

2 Journalism option: Choose 1 of 2

Tips for this section: Pick the option that fits you: print or online if you like writing, radio or TV if you like talking on mic or on camera.

Example for this section: For the print or online option, read a local paper, a national news site, a news magazine, and a news feed on the same day, and compare how each covered one story: its length, what it left out, and whether it seemed fair. Then tour a newsroom, in person or online if your counselor approves. For radio or TV, do the same comparison with newscasts and tour a station.

2a Option A: newspaper, magazine, and online journalism

- ☐ **2a1** On one day, read a local news source, a national news source, a news magazine (print or online), and a social media news feed (online with permission). Compare a story on the same event from each: tell your counselor its length, how fair and accurate it is, and how each source handled it

- ☐ **2a2** Tour a newspaper, magazine, or online news office (editorial, business, printing). Talk with a business-side executive about how management works with the reporters, photographers, and editors, and what makes an outlet good. A counselor-approved virtual visit is OK if none is nearby

2b Option B: radio and television journalism

- ☐ **2b1** On one day, watch a local and a national network newscast, hear a radio newscast, and (with permission) view a national news source online. List each story and feature, the elements used, and its time or online space. Compare them for fairness and accuracy, and explain why outlets differed

- ☐ **2b2** Tour a radio or TV station, focusing on the news departments. Talk with the station manager or another executive about how the station runs, how managers and the newsroom cooperate, and what makes a station good. If you can, go with a reporter to cover a story

- ☐ **3** Discuss how hard news stories differ from feature stories, and explain the five W's and H. Then do one of 3a–3d (choose 1 of 4 below)

Tip: Find one news story and one feature story in the same paper or site and compare them. Then write your own, checking off who, what, when, where, why, and how.

Example: A news story about a troop food drive leads with the facts: "Troop members collected 400 cans Saturday for the town pantry." A feature story might start with a person: "At 7 a.m., 12-year-old Sam was already stacking boxes."

- ☐ **3a** Pick a current or unusual event that interests you and write a hard news OR feature article about it, aimed at print, online, audio, or video. Share it with your counselor

- ☐ **3b** With a parent's or guardian's permission and your counselor's approval, interview someone influential in your community because of their leadership, talent, career, or life story. Give your counselor a written or spoken report on what you learned

- ☐ **3c** With a parent's or guardian's permission and your counselor's approval, read the autobiography of a journalist who interests you. Write an article on what you learned about them and what they've contributed to journalism

- ☐ **3d** Go to a Scouting event and report on it in a 200-word hard news or feature article, using inverted pyramid or chronological style. Review it with your counselor, then send it to a local newspaper or your council or district newsletter to consider

- ☐ **4** Go to a public event, then do one of 4a–4c (choose 1 of 3 below)

Tip: Cover something local, like a school board meeting, a parade, or a sports game. Take notes, get quotes, and write it up the same day while it's fresh.

Example: Cover a town parade: arrive early, take notes on what you see and hear, ask two people for quotes with their permission, and write your story that night. Check every name's spelling before you share it.

- ☐ **4a** Write 2 articles about the event: one in inverted pyramid style and one in chronological style

- ☐ **4b** In radio, TV, or podcast style, write three pieces about the event: a straight news story, a feature, and a critical review

- ☐ **4c** Tell the event's story with a series of photos, including both news and feature shots. Write a short summary of the event and captions for the photos

- ☐ **5** Identify 3 careers that use journalism skills. Pick one and research its training, education, certification, experience, and startup costs, plus job outlook, starting pay, and advancement. Talk it over with your counselor, including whether it interests you

Tip: Ask a local reporter or your school newspaper adviser how they got started and what a normal workday looks like.

Example: Compare three jobs: a beat reporter who covers schools, a photojournalist who tells stories with pictures, and a producer who decides what goes on a newscast. Find out the training and a typical day for each.