



‘Shout out, do not
hold back! Lift up
your voice like a
trumpet!’
— Isaiah 58:1

Monitoring Election Coverage on Television 101

1. **Pick a time period**, such as one week or one day during which you will monitor the news. (You might pick the day or week before Election Day for example.)
2. **Decide what questions you want to ask.** Do you want to know how much time is spent covering the election? Do you want to look deeper into particular news stories about the election (such as looking at stories that only cover the campaign for mayor)? You might just want to compare how many stories tell you what candidates believe about issues with how many stories focus on polls or campaign strategies. You can evaluate whether women or people of color are treated fairly by the news. This is your project, so you can ask whatever question you would like to ask.
3. **Decide which television stations you will monitor.** For example, you might want to pick all the local network affiliates in your town (the television stations affiliated with NBC, CBS, ABC, and Fox). If you have any local cable news, you might want to include that channel as well. If you can't monitor all of those channels, you can decide to pick one station based on which channels are the most popular, or pick a channel that you believe may be doing a poor job of offering election coverage.
4. **Decide which news programs you will monitor.** It is often best to monitor all the news programs on a particular station, but that can include newscasts at many times during the day, so you might only pick the 6 p.m. and 11 p.m. broadcasts, for example. If you are planning a more in-depth analysis, you might decide to review fewer programs because you will need to spend more time evaluating each program.
5. **Make recordings of the programs.** Use DVR to be sure that you have copies of all of the shows you are monitoring. If you are working with a group, you can ask one person to record each station. If you are working on your own, you might need to get some volunteers to help record other channels.
6. **Decide when and how you will evaluate the programs.** Often it is more interesting and fun to get together with several other people and review news programming for a few hours together. Or each person can work individually for a few hours and report back to the group.
7. **Photocopy the form on the reverse of this page** so that there is one copy for each program and for each person reviewing programs. Make sure you have a timer that can accurately measure the length of a story that may only be 15 seconds long. Add column headings if you need them to ask the questions you want to ask.
8. **Complete the evaluations forms.** Review the programming, writing down the general topic of each story and the length of time of the story, using the categories listed.

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9. **Add up the totals and write up your analysis.** How many total minutes were there? How many stories on each topic? How much programming on other topics? Did they cover issues, or campaign strategies and polls? Think about the content of the stories. Write down a few conclusions about the content of

the stories — how many covered local elections as compared with national elections?

10. **A good resource for other ideas** on how to watch and read election stories is the Media Mouse project at www.mediamouse.org.

Channel & Program Date	Story Topic	Length	Covered Local Campaign?	Covered Issues?	Other Category
Fox 5 News 11 p.m. 6/24/12	City Council election	35 sec.	Yes (Yes/No)	No, covered voter turnout (Yes/No)	
TOTALS					