

THE
SITUATION ROOM
★ ★ ★ EXPERIENCE

HOW TO READ A DOCUMENT

HOW TO READ A MEMORANDUM

Correspondence within the government is often formatted like the following example. This worksheet will help you understand how to read all parts of this type of correspondence to prepare for the Situation Room Experience.

NOTE: Text like "Confidential" that denotes the level of secrecy around a message

4535

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

July 1, 1983

CONFIDENTIAL

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR: WILLIAM P. CLARK

THROUGH: CHARLES P. TYSON

FROM: PAULA DOBRIANSKY

SUBJECT: Request for Presidential Photo Opportunity: European Parliament President Piet Dankert

State has forwarded a memorandum (Tab II) requesting that a photo opportunity be granted with the President for European Parliament President Piet Dankert early in November. As this would be Dankert's first official visit to the U.S. since his election as President of the European Parliament on February 19, 1982, I recommend that this request be given favorable consideration. A Schedule Proposal is attached at Tab I.

Al Myer concurs.

RECOMMENDATION

That you forward the Schedule Proposal at Tab I.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

Attachments:

Tab I Schedule Proposal
Tab II State memorandum, June 29, 1983

cc: Jack Matlock
Peter Sommer

Declassified
Sec 34(b), E.O. 12958, as amended
White House Guidelines, Sept. 11, 2008
BY NARA, Date 1/12/10

CONFIDENTIAL
Declassify on: OADR

Find sender, receiver, subject, etc. here

The main message

Notification of additional attachments to the message

Recipient approves/disapproves a suggestion

Note the "declassified" stamp that makes the document available for the public to read

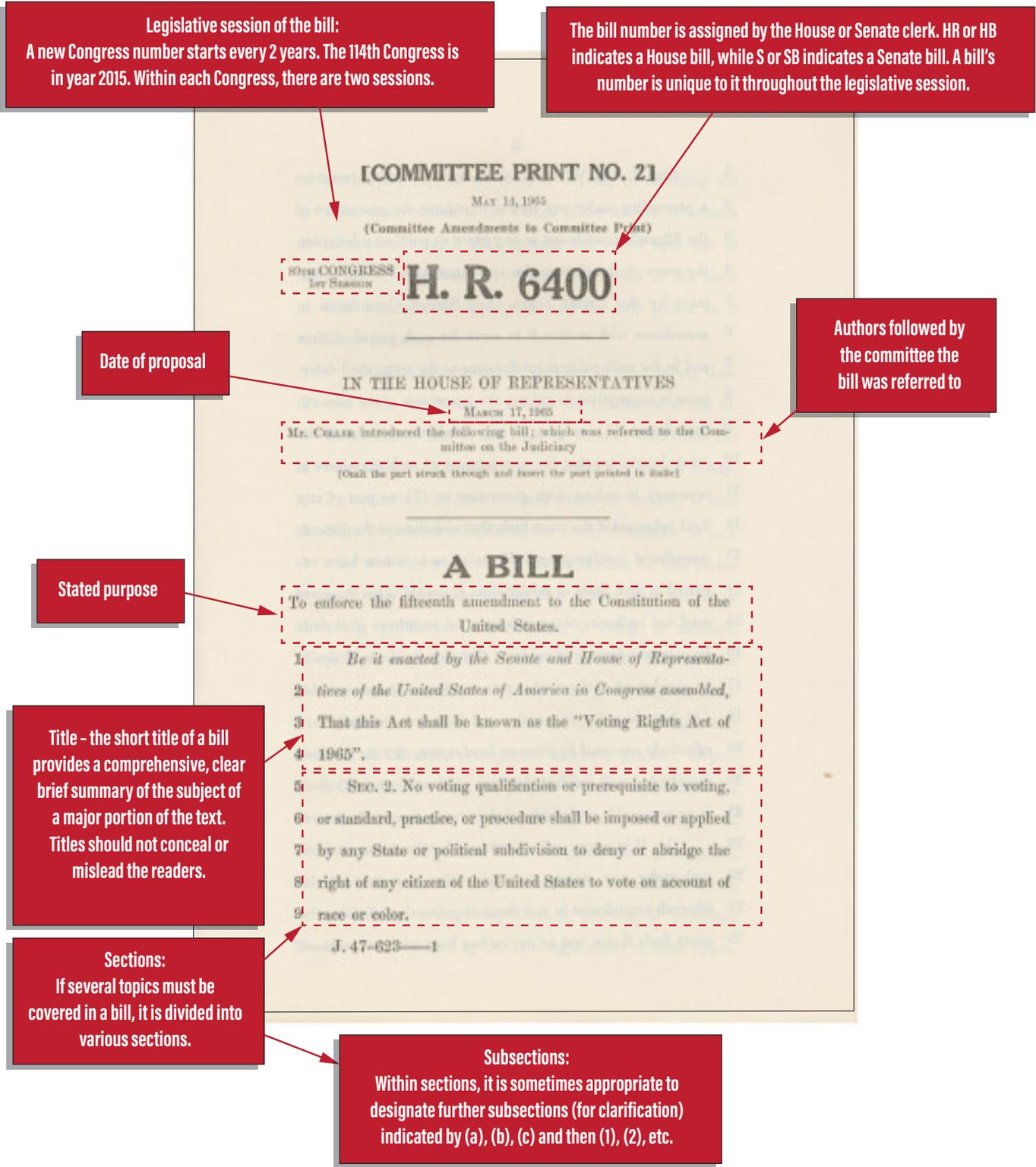
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The term "Breaking News" means you are meant to be watching new information about an event that is happening right now.

1. Summarize the "Breaking News" report you just watched.
2. Did the reporter accurately reflect what was happening in the background?
3. Did you bring previous knowledge or preconceived ideas to your experience? Did this influence your experience of the material?
4. What are the differences between a breaking news broadcast and a pre-recorded report? What might change in the images, content, situation, and level of impact of each?
5. What were some of your emotions while watching the video, and what prompted them?
6. Do you think the report was one-sided or did it explain differing viewpoints on the situation?
7. What two or more questions would you like to ask about the situation you just watched unfold?

HOW TO READ A BILL

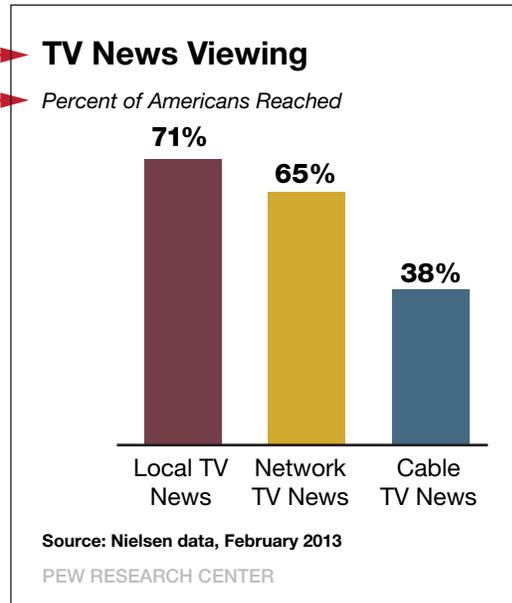
Bill – proposed law, amendment to a law, or amendment to the Constitution



HOW TO READ TABLES AND CHARTS

Know what is being measured: look at the graph title, x & y axis, and other labels or keys to familiarize yourself with the content

Look for sub-categories or keys that allow for further analysis of graph or chart data. For example, the color coding in these two graphs allows for easier differentiation, and the sub-categories of heavy, light, and medium TV viewers in minutes watched per day clarifies meaning in the second graph.

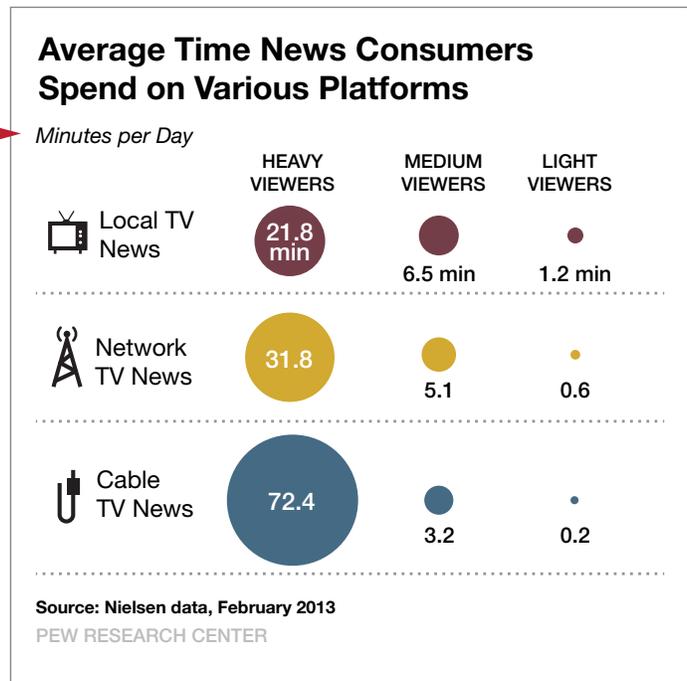


What are the units used in measurement? (Hours versus minutes is a big difference!)

Test your graph reading skills:

Can you state one data piece from the graph?
Example: Heavy TV viewers for Local TV News watch about 21.8 minutes of it per day.

Look for short-term and long-term trends or surprising data to make inferences and generalizations.
(Does anything double or show dramatic change? What could have caused this?)



HOW TO READ A CABLE

Cable - the term given to a confidential message.

The diagram illustrates the structure of a cable message. Red boxes on the left contain labels, and red arrows point from these labels to corresponding parts of the cable text. The cable text itself is a teletype message, with several key sections highlighted by dashed red boxes.

Labels and their corresponding parts in the cable:

- The situation and subject matter of the cable:** Points to the 'SITUATION: PRES' and 'SUBJECT CATEGORY: ASSASSIN' lines.
- Date:** Points to the 'DATE 04/28/81//' line.
- All the people who will get the cable:** Points to the 'TO ALL DIPLOMATIC POSTS FLASH' and distribution list.
- The subject of the cable:** Points to the 'SUBJECT: STATEMENT TO FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS' and the numbered list of points.
- The message:** Points to the numbered list of points (1, 2, 3).
- The author:** Points to the 'HAIG' and 'BT' lines.

Key sections of the cable text:

SENSITIVE
 PAGE 18 SITUATION(S) MESSAGE(S) LISTING
 DATE 04/28/81//
 SITUATION: PRES
 SUBJECT CATEGORY: ASSASSIN
 MESSAGE / ANNOTATION:
 MESSAGE:
 FLASH
 Z 310103Z MAR 81 ZFF4
 FM SECSTATE WASHDC
 TO ALL DIPLOMATIC POSTS FLASH
 AMEMBASSY KABUL FLASH 5016
 AMEMBASSY CONAKRY FLASH 5307
 UNCLAS STATE 080707
 E.O. 12065:IN/A
 TAGS:PDIP
 SUBJECT: STATEMENT TO FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS
 1. THE PRESIDENT HAS UNDERGONE SURGERY FOR THE GUNSHOT WOUND RECEIVED IN THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION THIS AFTERNOON IN WASHINGTON. THE BULLET HAS BEEN REMOVED. THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN REMOVED TO POST-OPERATIVE CARE, IS IN GOOD CONDITION WITH PROGNOSIS EXCELLENT.
 2. PLEASE INFORM YOUR GOVERNMENT OF THIS LATEST DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUE TO REASSURE YOUR HOST THAT THE CONTINUITY OF OUR GOVERNMENT IS ASSURED.
 3. WE WILL KEEP YOU CLOSELY INFORMED AS EVENTS WARRANT.
 HAIG
 BT
 ***** WSHR COMMENTS *****
 RA,NAN,COE,VP
 SEA
 PSN:003815 DTG:310103 TOR:090011
 SENSITIVE