

Show, Don't Tell



How to Turn Text-Based Journalism
into Visual-First Formats

**I lead first-of-its-kind teams that drive
change and transformation across newsrooms**



Casey Silvestri

Director of Social, Video & Design
at The Associated Press

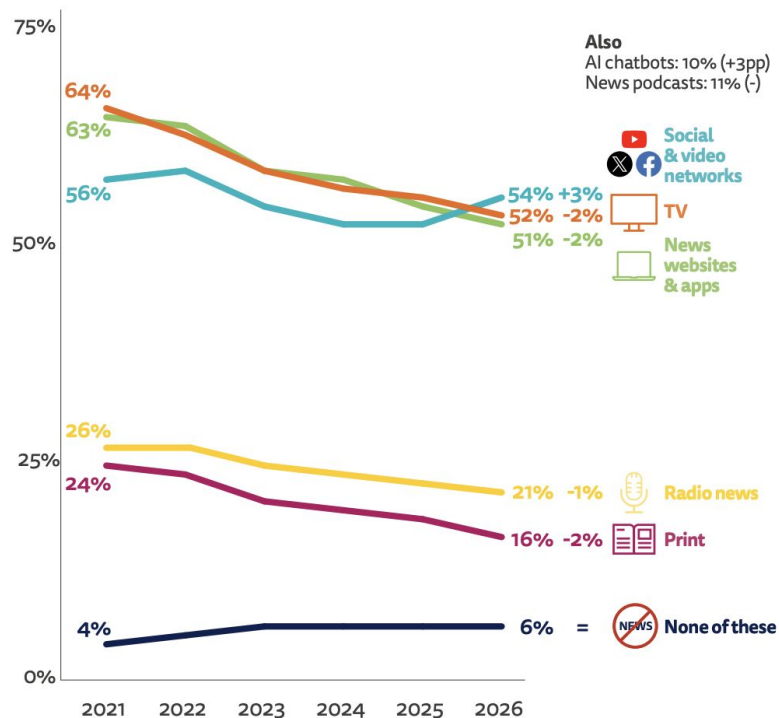


**Where do *you* get
your news?** 

Social and video networks are now the most widely used way of consuming news

Source: [Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2026](#)

PROPORTION WHO USED EACH AS A SOURCE OF NEWS IN
THE LAST WEEK - ALL MARKETS



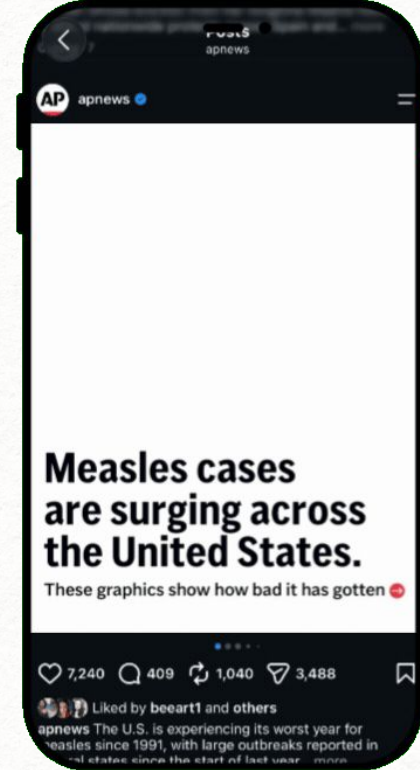
Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Base: Total sample in each market-year = 2,000. Note: 2021-3 sample based on 46 markets, 2024 on 47 markets, 2025-6 on 48 markets.

Video



Credit: Jacquelyn Martin

Visuals



Credit: Peter Hamlin/Phil Holm

Which format do I choose?

Today's
focus



My story includes...

Video or Visual

A complex process or multiple storytelling elements (photos, docs, etc)	Video explainer or multimedia carousel
On-the-ground reporting	Video dispatch or photo-driven carousel
A strong character	Sound bite or quote card
A striking or compelling moment	Short UGC-style video clip or annotated photo
Numbers or geographic trends	Animated map or data visualization (chart, graph, etc)

✨ **Most important tip:** *Start with the end in mind. Have a sense of format so you know what to capture during the reporting process.*

Before you proceed with either format:

What's your headline?

Original headline

*Shutdown looms: What it could mean for families,
government services and the economy*



New headline

What stays open if the government shuts down?

Create a 3-column script

Intro / Hook

Try opening with a simple question or a surprising fact. 3-5 seconds

Context

Bullet out your points if you're stuck. "Every video is a list." 30-45 seconds.

Call to Action

One clear takeaway or next step. 3-5 seconds.

Script template is [here](#)

	WHAT TO SHOW	WHAT TO SAY	SOURCES
1. INTRO / HOOK	ON-CAM W/ GRAPHICS: What stays open if the government shuts down?	<i>What stays open if the government shuts down?</i>	
	ON-CAM: Quick jump cut/punch in on the standup	<i>Honestly? More than you'd think.</i>	
2. KEY POINTS	V/O WITH B-ROLL: Split screen of 3 photos: - Mail truck or letters - Military vehicles - Veteran hospital exteriors	<i>Your mail still shows up.</i> <i>The military remains on duty.</i> <i>And medical facilities like VA hospitals keep their doors open.</i>	USAFacts
	V/O WITH B-ROLL: - Departure board - Flight taking off / ATC tower - Airport security	<i>If you've got a flight booked, you should be ok there too.</i> <i>Air traffic control and the TSA do stay on the job...but without pay until funding is restored.</i>	CRFB.org
	ON-CAM W/ GRAPHICS: - National Park Service seal - Smithsonian logo	<i>And if you happen to be traveling to a national park or federal museum, definitely check whether they're staying open!</i>	USAFacts
	ON-CAM W/ GRAPHICS: - SSA seal ✓ - Medicare logo ✓ - Bank icon (for unemployment) ✓ - SNAP logo ⚠ - WIC logo ⚠	<i>Social Security, Medicare and unemployment payments are generally not affected, either.</i> <i>But assistance programs like SNAP and WIC are less certain if their funding runs out.</i>	CRFB.org
3. CALL TO ACTION	ON-CAM W/ GRAPHICS: Example website screenshot of TSA, USPS, etc.	<i>To check the status of a specific agency, try going to their website directly.</i> <i>Most will post a shutdown notice at the top to explain what specifically is affected.</i>	

Filming yourself?

You don't need fancy equipment. I promise!



DJI Mic 2 (1 TX + 1 RX)
\$129 [\(Link\)](#)



Hollyland Lark M2
\$88 [\(Link\)](#)



DJI Mic Mini
\$45 [\(Link\)](#)



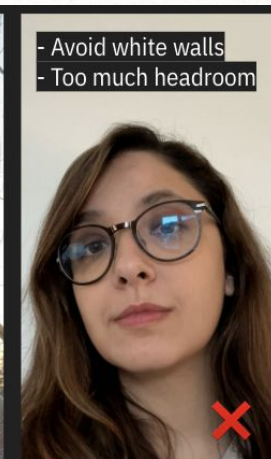
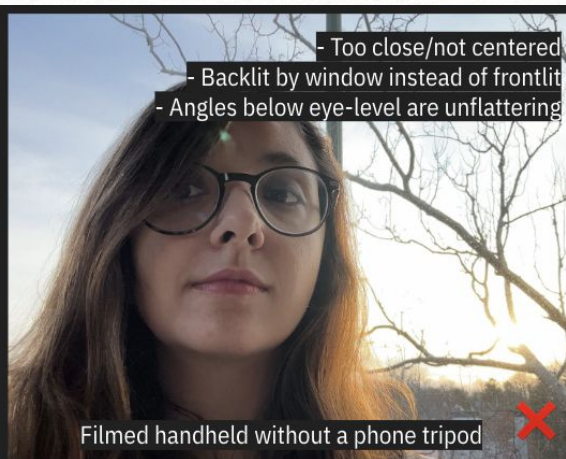
EUCOS 62" Selfie Stick
\$24 [\(Link\)](#)



Gooseneck tripod
\$20 - 40 [\(Link\)](#)

Video tips

- **Turn off HDR** in your camera settings! Colors can look washed out once you edit.
- **Shooting in 4K** for more flexibility to crop and zoom - but it will take up more memory.
- **Wipe your camera lens** (front and back) with a microfiber/glasses cloth. Trust me.



Audio tips

- Keep your mic **a palm's length away from your mouth** to avoid pops and breathing sounds.
- No mic? **Record a voiceover in a closet** or with a blanket over your head to make your own audio booth.
- **Record 10 sec of background noise.** You can layer it under audio trims to make the cuts sound smoother.

Deciphering video editing tools



Descript (Free tier, then \$16/month)

- Desktop-based app for video and audio editing.
- Text-based editing: Like you're editing with a Google Doc, not a timeline
- Free tier exists but it exports with a watermark at lower resolution



CapCut (Free tier, then \$20/month)

- App or desktop version
- Desktop is a good next step if you're familiar with the app
- Popular features are increasingly shifting to paid



DaVinci Resolve (Free version or \$295 for a one-time purchase)

- Desktop-based app, steeper learning curve
- Free tier is great for learning, but limited AI-assisted features like noise reduction
- Has robust built-in tools for audio, graphics and color grading

What about...all the other stuff?!

Music + SFX

- [Pixabay Music](#)
- [Incompetech/Kevin MacLeod](#)
- [Uppbeat](#)
- [Freesound](#) (sound effects only)

Visual Elements

- [Pixabay](#)
- [Wikimedia Commons](#)
- [Archive.org](#) + [Prelinger Collection](#)
- [Pexels](#)
- Gov't ([NASA](#), [Library of Congress](#))
- [Datawrapper](#) (Maps/charts)

⚠ Two things to keep in mind:

- Always check the specific license - public domain or royalty-free material can require attribution
- Save a record of where you downloaded/licensed the material in case you ever get a content ID claim

Carousel time!



Credit: Gaius Cornelius / CC BY-SA 4.0

Fun fact: This GIF is from the [Wikimedia Commons](#) under a Creative Commons license!



Credit: Jacob Hutzler/Abby Lee

Carousel Best Practices

Similar Formula to Video

Title Slide (Hook) > Key Points > Final Slide (CTA)
Slide 2 is just as important as Slide 1

Your Specs Matter

*Platforms now prioritize 4:5 aspect ratio
(1080 × 1350 pixels) instead of square*

How to Structure Slides

6-8 slides is a good balance.
Limit it to one idea per slide.

SLIDE	VISUAL	TEXT	SOURCES
1. TITLE SLIDE + 2ND SLIDE HOOK (Add a swipe cue, like an arrow. Slide 2 may be seen first, so have it serve as its own hook too)	Text with an arrow icon at the end of subheadline to encouraging swiping	HEADLINE: <i>What stays open if the government shuts down?</i> SUBBED: <i>Honestly? More than you'd think. →</i>	
	Agency logos or icons with ✅ marks	TITLE TEXT <i>Services that won't shut down:</i> BODY TEXT: - USPS - Military / VA Facilities - TSA / Air Traffic Control - Social Security/Medicare payments	USAFacts
2. KEY POINTS (One idea per slide. Aim for under 25 words)	SNAP and WIC logos	TITLE TEXT <i>What about SNAP, WIC and other benefits?</i> BODY TEXT: <i>These programs may continue initially, but disruptions are possible if funding runs out.</i>	CRFB.org
	National Park Service and Smithsonian logos	TITLE TEXT <i>Planning a trip to a national park or federally-run museum?</i> BODY TEXT: <i>Parts of parks may stay open, but visitor centers and restrooms could close.</i>	USAFacts
	Bar chart showing the duration of shutdowns over the past 30 years	TITLE TEXT <i>How long do shutdowns typically last?</i>	CRFB.org
3. CALL TO ACTION (One clear takeaway or next step)	Example website screenshot of TSA, USPS, etc.	TITLE TEXT <i>Need to check a specific service?</i> BODY TEXT: <i>Visit the agency's website and see if they've posted a shutdown notice.</i>	

Slide plan template is [here](#)

Steal my Canva template

- Made entirely with **Canva's free tier** - no upgrading needed
- Includes info on **free charts + maps** using **Datawrapper**
- [Click here](#) to view the template and go to **File > Make A Copy**

**Your title text
can go across
these 3 lines**

You can keep subheadings simple:
"Swipe to see how it unfolded" ➡

**Here's an option to
even add a photo,
if you like**

Here's what happened next

Perhaps you want a slide that shows a full photo, with our without text annotations. That's a fairly straightforward setup!

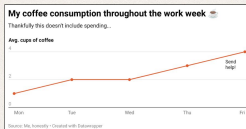
It's a-okay if you don't have a visual for every slide. Text slides on a solid background work just fine, too. Carousels are flexible!

You can even flip the color scheme to shake things up. See how that caught your attention?

“Or maybe there’s a powerful quote you want to share from an interview.”

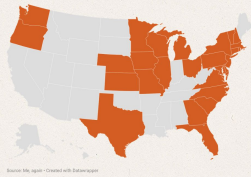
— **Name goes here**
Title will go here

Now is a good time to tell you about [Datawrapper](#).



It can create unlimited, free charts, maps and tables. The only catch is it includes a "Created with Datawrapper" credit.

States I've visited in the U.S. 🇺🇸
Looks like I need to visit the southwest



Here's an example of a map created in Datawrapper. Export it with a transparent background so it blends right into your slide.

Remember these are all just suggestions to help you get started. You know how to tell your story best across all these formats and platforms.



Here's an option to add a small photo credit

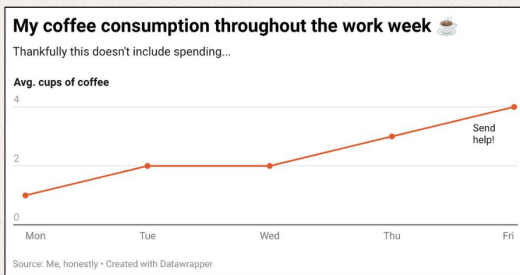
If a viewer swipes to the end of your carousel. What action do they take next?

Perhaps you add your @handle here
to encourage folks to follow you

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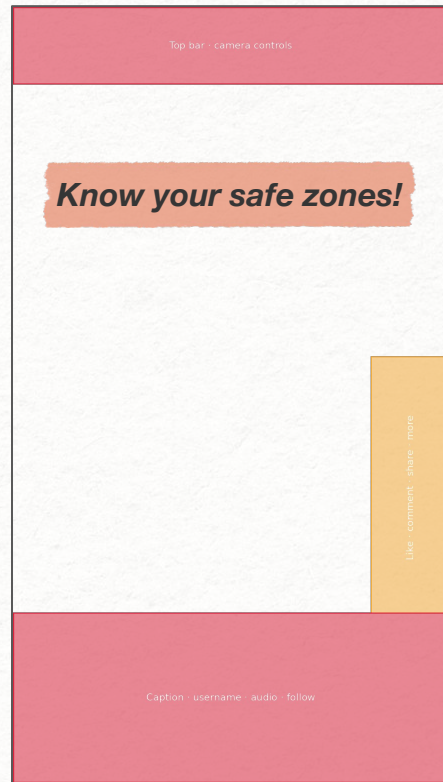
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Pre-Publish Checklist

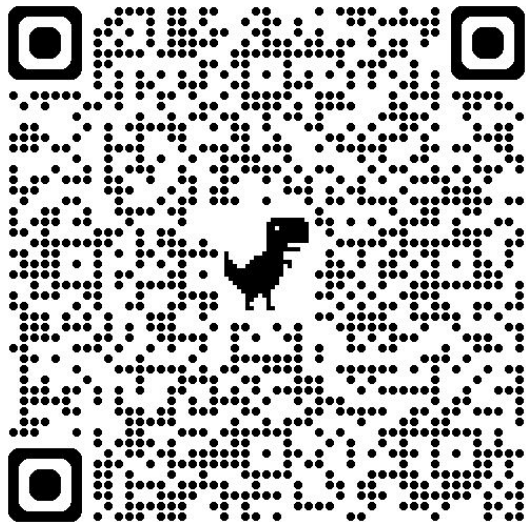
- Do you have a **corresponding caption** that works across platforms? Is it optimized with **searchable keywords**?
- If it's video: Have you checked your **safe zones**? Do you need a **thumbnail** for specific platforms?
- Have you considered further promotion via a link in bio or a **comment-to-DM** tool like ManyChat?

For more Balkan travel tips and musings, comment with a newspaper emoji 📰 and I'll send you the link to my substack.



- [Universal safe zone overlay](#)
- [Platform-specific safe zones](#)

Questions



*Scan the QR code to
save this deck*



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