



How different is public media?

Imagine you work for a public TV or radio station. Would you approach your job differently than if you were working for commercial-supported media? Yes, says writer David Cohn [on the web site](#) of the activist group Free Press. As evidence, he cites a survey from the public media web site he founded, spot.us.

Activities:

Flashlight: How popular do you think public broadcasting is? Look at the “[170 Million Americans for Public Broadcasting](#)” site, follow the links to their [Facebook page](#). Does the number of “likes” tell you anything? Public broadcasting advocates say their content is highly educational and thus their audiences smaller but more influential. Do you agree?

Spotlight: Imagine you are a public radio reporter. Your friend is a commercial radio reporter. You both are at city hall covering a story on taxes. Would you do the same story? Why or why not? What does that tell you about your content philosophy? Is the danger of bias the same for both reporters or different? Which of you is most likely to be using the newest tools? Students can discuss this with their classmates and write a short summary.

Spotlight: You are a public television station’s general manager. Your friend is a daily newspaper publisher. Where do you get the money to pay for your broadcasts? Where does your friend get money to run the newspaper? What happens in either case when sponsors or advertisers are the subjects of negative stories? Is the chance of money influencing the news more or less likely in public broadcasting? Would you need to put special policies in place? Write a one-page paper addressing these challenges.