

The BBC's official festive fifty bias techniques

*This post first appeared on the **Is the BBC Biased?** website. The original can be viewed [here](#).*

Although written a few weeks ago as a Christmas piece, we think that Brexit campaigners will find it a useful tool at any time of the year. By keeping this list handy and familiarising yourself with the techniques enumerated, you can immediately spot this manipulation of any given item of news by the BBC.

Courtesy of Monkey Brains in the comments, here's MB's John Peel-style Festive Fifty, which observers of BBC bias everywhere may enjoy this pre-Christmas weekend.

So raise your mulled wine glasses please, ladies and gentlemen, and let the countdown begin...

(Be warned though. The Undertones won't be at Number One).

A seasonal message from Lord Hall, Director General of the BBC:

In this era of fake news, Russian subversion of referenda to produce incorrect results and the installation of a fascist dictatorship in the USA, I thought it apposite and timely, to publish a list of our 50 top Bias Techniques, lest anyone should think we were being complacent about the challenges facing us in the contemporary media world. This list will act as a helpful guide for our staff but I hope it will also reassure the public at large that we have their best interests at heart.

1. Bias by News Agenda Choice. The biggie. If we don't

report it, it's not news. And we don't like to report things like the Synagogue attack in Stockholm, no go areas in the UK or the New Year's Eve events in Cologne a while back.

2. **Bias by News Prioritising.** OK, sometimes we can't avoid reporting something but we can certainly give it very low priority. It only needs to appear for a nanosecond for us to be able to say that we have done our journalistic duty.
3. **Bias in Perpetuity.** If we like a story..."Tories racist says report"...we might leave it up on our website for months to make sure just about everyone gets to see it, even though we are allegedly a news" organisation. Likewise we will return obsessively to stories we love like Grenfell Tower.
4. **Bias by Burying.** If we don't like a story we will bury it away somewhere like "News from Leicester" which you get to by navigating four or five pages on our website. In terms of broadcasting you will have to live in the East Midlands to be informed of what happened. I am not going to say what happened, because that would defeat the objective of this particular technique.
5. **Bias by Headline Creep.** Sometimes we know a story hasn't really got legs but by using the headline ruse we can make it sound a lot better. So "Boris "racism" claim" on the front page of the website becomes..."Boris claims government is acting on racism"...becomes "Boris has rejected a UN report claiming that racism in the UK is rising at an alarming rate".
6. **Bias by Interruption.** An old time favourite...if you don't like what the interviewer is saying, interrupt them to hell and back, so that they can't get their points across. Some right wing obsessives on the internet try to expose this bias by recording the number of such interruptions and comparing that number with interruptions of favoured guests, but such statistical exposure of this technique can be dismissed by a vague,

airy “Notwithstanding this particular interview, we consider the programme, taken in the round, was balanced and impartial”.

7. **Bias by Misrepresentation.** It’s important that we at the BBC control debate by ensuring we get to mispresent viewpoints. Under this approach, being worried about hardly ever hearing the English language spoken in your neighbourhood (a perfectly legitimate concern) obviously becomes “racist attitudes to migrants”. Of course we don’t simply assert that – to do so would be crass and far too obvious. Instead we imply it via other bias techniques e.g. “Bias by Question and Some Say”.
8. **Bias by Concept Merge.** Sometimes it pays to be pedantically precise about definitions (a favourite of both Dimblebys on occasion). But with this technique, it is important to be vague and overlap differing concepts until the viewer or listener is taught, in Pavlovian fashion, to associate “Member of Conservative Party” with “Far Right Nut”. Thus we merge “Neo-Nazi” into “Far Right”, which in turn merges into “Right Wing” which then merges into “Nationalist” (as in “Bad Nationalist” – obviously does not apply to SNP, *Sinn Féin* and *Plaid Cymru*) and further blends with “Tory” and “Conservative”. By constant mixing and association Neo Nazis, Nationalists and Tories all become part of a dangerous amorphous group that like to persecute minorities. We find this approach very effective at the BBC.
9. **Bias by Mirroring.** Under this ruse we call extreme radicals like Iranian Mullahs or Chinese Communists “Conservatives” so as to make toxic the whole “conservative” brand. You have to admire our cheek in doing so! But the useless Tories never make any effective protests about this.
10. **Bias by Intimidation.** We tell our audience that we will report them to their employer or school if they voice opinions of which we disapprove. This can be more

effective than you might think. Of course we have combined this with a sustained attack on the *Have Your Say* function on our website and also by turning the Feedback programme into a meaningless “complaints from both sides” exercise now stuffed full of disguised adverts for BBC programmes.

11. **Bias by Mockery.** The mockery is not just something for “comedy” panel shows or the *Now Show*. News presenters can also join in the mockery of anything the BBC doesn’t like. Eddie Mair and Jonny Diamond have I think done some excellent work in this area. But woe betide anyone who mocked say Stella Creasy or Chukka Umuna!!! (not that that would ever happen under my watch!) – that would be sexist and racist and would lead to instant dismissal. We of course produce an in-house list of who to mock and who not. Currently Boris Johnson and Michael Gove are top of the list. But such lists can of course change and staff should keep up with developments.
12. **Bias by Complaint Dismissal.** As long as we keep batting away complaints in the face of the truth and the facts, we can maintain our absurd formal claim of impartiality. It is therefore important that the programmes we claim allow the viewer or listener a voice should be tightly controlled. I have of course instructed all editors and producers to hold the line and deny bias by claiming complaints from both sides and if they cannot defend something, claim a broader overall balance across the piece.
13. **Bias by Propaganda Tentacle.** The BBC has a long reach. Our correspondents can use Twitter to voice more extreme anti-democratic, pro-Antifa opinions through re-tweeting. We are now going into schools as well to brainwash children with our “Fake News” agenda. Our tentacles can basically reach anywhere.
14. **Bias by Question Selection.** What questions get asked is vital. If you think we pull the QT questions out of a hat then you are very, very naïve.

15. **Bias by Simple Fact Denial or Avoidance.** For instance we will not admit even the possibility that the housing crisis might have something to do with mass immigration. It's rather like that loose thread in a pullover. If you start pulling on it before long the whole thing will unravel. So we have to maintain "Complete Fact Denial" in those very sensitive areas touching on the central tenets of our PC Multiculturalist doctrine.
16. **Bias by Expert.** We choose the experts. Our experts are guaranteed to support our views. That's how and why we select them!
17. **Bias by Org-Labeling.** For instance, that think tank is "right wing", this think tank (the one we like) is "respected"! It's not so difficult once you get the hang of it.
18. **Bias by Person Labeling.** That person (someone standing up for beliefs that were uncontroversial 50 years ago) is "far right", this person (a Marxist totalitarian) is the "conscience of the left" or a "revered academic and commentator".
19. **Bias by Tone of Voice.** So important! When we are children we listen to our parents' tone of voice before we understand the meaning of their words. Are our parents angry or pleased with us? We know this and so we play on these very human weaknesses. Our presenters sound surprised if a right wing person does a nice thing or somehow escapes justice when we have been looking forward to their downfall. Equally they make it sound like their mother has died if the PC Multiculturalist liberal-left suffer a reversal, however minor.
20. **Bias by Atypical Person Choice.** It may be true that most female followers of Islam in Bradford may wear a Hijab and rarely go outside the family home but we have the resources at our disposal to find one who doesn't wear a head covering, uses make up, wears tight jeans and has set up her own business. Once we have found her we are going to give her the full PR treatment on your shows,

eventually giving her her own series.

21. **Bias by Drama and Soap.** I can't overemphasise the importance of this bias technique. This is how we really buttress the news and indoctrination agenda. We use drama and soap to signal approval or disapproval and to identify what issues the public should think are important.
22. **Bias by Lifestyle Show.** We can make frightening things appear comforting all by the magic of lifestyle TV. Of course this has to be managed. It can be an area requiring sensitive handling. We didn't show a Hijab for years. Big beard presenters are still out and the Burka is I am afraid still a big no-no. But this is a Long March we are on. Eventually we will be able to desensitise the backward segment of the British public on such matters by associating such features with nice things like baking, cooking, shopping and home décor.
23. **Bias by Over-representation of Minorities.** You see a lot of this on TV adverts of course and we have to take our hat off to our commercial colleagues in that regard. The message of course is "resistance is useless". It is supposed to deliver a jolt and acclimatise people to further volcanic demographic change. We are of course doing everything we can at the BBC to ensure that minorities (officially only 13% of the population) are over-represented in a number of key areas like news presentation. When it comes to drama, we are quite happy to provide misleading representations of classics from the Victorian period now, sacrificing accuracy to our PC Multiculturalist principles. Of course when we talk about ethnic minority representation we mean generally African-Caribbean, African and South Asian. At the BBC we don't much care about how many Poles, Arabs, Romanians, Chinese, French or Latin Americans are on our screens despite there being very large communities from those ethnic groups in our country. I hope at some point to explain why that is but sadly time is limited and I

must press on. (Ahem).

24. **Bias by Slow Information Release.** We wouldn't want you to run away with the idea there's just been a terrorist incident carried out by an IS operative migrant who shouted Allahu Akbar...so we will slowly drip feed the news and then disappear the story altogether. Often we will use the "mental ill health" ploy to justify this.
25. **Bias by Local News as National News.** Local news is a good way of extending the bias especially in areas where there are lots of Labour MPs and we can call on them to provide a steady drumbeat of public expenditure propaganda . We always favour local news with a national flavour...so expect lots of NHS cuts and not much about the County Show.
26. **Bias by Survey.** Our opinion polls are frequently wrong. But they always seem to favour the left for some reason. Sometimes our levels of bias are off the scale as was the case with the Newsnight panel of "ordinary voters" that voted 9-1 to remain. BBC Staff should not be embarrassed by this, rather they should see polls as weapons in our hand not instruments of science.
27. **Bias by Decree.** Here, the likes of John Simpson or David Dimbleby – once respected as cutting edge journalists – trot out the BBC narrative without appearing to have thought about what they are saying first. In our BBC world of bias, if they say so, it must be true. You might call this the "Hillary Good, Trump Bad" approach.
28. **Bias by Obfuscation.** David Dimbleby is of the view that if he poses a smugly sceptical or irrelevant question "But we don't know that was an official Mosque letter, do we?" (irrelevant – it was clearly being handed out at the Mosque in full view) or "But do you have an example of the BBC saying "despite Brexit"? " (Answer: Guido Fawkes website had plenty of examples the next day!), he has neutralised the critique. Obviously he hasn't genuinely neutralised the critique, but at the BBC we feel it is "the moment" that counts. As long as he

appears to have raised legitimate doubts that is enough. It is my view this is an effective Bias technique as Dimbleby is sly enough to time his semi-rhetorical questions at just the right point so they don't get or can't be answered. They therefore serve our purpose.

29. **Bias by Yawn.** Sadly this is a rare example of a technique that has been tried but proved unsuccessful. It was attempted in the run up to and during the early part of the EU Referendum campaign as we got nearly all our TV and radio presenters to imply that everyone was bored with the Referendum debate even though we now all know the opposite was true: family and friends often ended up having passionate debates on the subject (some are still continuing to this date!). But we at the BBC were trying to reduce the interest in the campaign, as we knew that was important in ensuring the anti-EU vote did not get mobilised. Frankly, we failed. Though we cannot be blamed for the decision to have a Referendum (we strongly opposed that), we were wrong to pursue that ineffective technique. We should have been much more pro-Remain from the outset. Eventually we realised the yawn technique was proving ineffective: the pretend yawns stopped and it was then we desperately tried "educating" everyone to vote remain. But sadly, it was too late. Personally I feel the Government should have given us more leeway to support the Remain campaign, even though we did our best to back their arguments and rubbish the Leave campaign. Clearly it wasn't enough.
30. **Bias by False Friend.** This is one we have been using a lot recently in relation to events in the US: "So let's go over to Washington to discuss Trump's latest tweet. We have leader of the Democrats in the House of Representatives and the Republican Governor for Wyoming..." Our audience thinks this sounds balanced since it's one Democrat and one Republican. But of course, we know something they don't – this particular Republican Governor hates Trump as much as the Democrat. We see

similar set ups with our domestic politics “Here to discuss the Government’s proposals are Chukka Umuna, Labour MP and Ken Clarke, Conservative...” only Clarke is going bash the proposals almost as much as Chukka.

31. **Bias by Herd Instinct.** Human beings have a tendency to follow the herd or the “troop” (since we are primates!)...so we at the BBC do our best to create bandwagons for the campaigns we favour. Biased BBC Trending do a lot of good work in this area.
32. **Bias by Recruitment.** This is what we at the BBC call the “Guardian readers only need apply” ploy. Don’t worry – I am a Guardian Reader!!! lol This is really a very important and self-fulfilling bias category.
33. **Bias by Vocabulary Choice.** This is of course a huge area of bias. The “bread and butter” of bias you might call it. It covers many things but among my favourites are right wing think tanks “claim”, “assert”, things whereas left wing think tanks “point out”, “conclude”, “find evidence”...During the EU Referendum campaign pro-Remain agencies were always concluding, calculating, pointing out and finding...or projecting, predicting (never guessing!)...When Remain claims were criticised by the Leave side, we at the BBC always used the language of emotion and violence instead of cool consideration: the Leave side “angrily denied”, “lashed out”, “slammed” etc
34. **Bias by Paragraphing.** We often leave the key information to the penultimate para of a long article (not the final paragraph because people sometimes skip to that). You can hope the punters have got bored by then and miss it...thinking the perpetrator was simply a “man” with known “mental health issues” not someone who visited Afghanistan last year and was carrying an IS flag.
35. **Bias by Mandy Rice Davies.** The point of this technique is to make the denial sound as thin as possible. I think Norman Smith is quite good at this. Norman is adept at telling us the unfavoured have “denied” something...but does so in a “well wouldn’t you too if you’d been found

out” sort of way...It’s normally the right who get this treatment of course but there was a phase when the BBC when we were gunning for Corbyn and we gave him the same treatment (this was when we at the BBC thought Corbyn was a vote-loser who would keep the Tories in power for the next 20 years – now of course it’s all Christmas jumpers with Jezza’s face on it! – he’s forgiven, for the time being).

36. **Bias by Uneven Standards.** Of course at the BBC we believe in high standards, we just don’t believe in applying them consistently around the world. For instance we hold Israel to a much high standard than Saudi Arabia (which doesn’t even allow people to profess Christianity). We report obsessively about their “illegal occupation” of Arab land. But illegal occupation of land is a rather flexible concept. We never, or only very rarely, give Russia and China any grief about their huge empires and their occupation of territories against the people’s will. We don’t ask representatives of countries like Australia, Brazil, Canada and Argentina about eradication of indigenous peoples. Romania’s occupation of Magyar lands is of no interest to us at the BBC. Likewise, while we show an inordinate interest in civilian killings in the US by gunfire we have no interest in such killings in Mexico or Brazil, and absolutely no interest in the murder of thousands of white farmers in South Africa. While we at the BBC are willing to shed tears over a few thousand Palestinian Arabs losing their homes and being “forced” to flee some 70 years ago, we have no interest in the many millions of Europeans, Jews, Hindus and Christians forced to flee from the Middle East and South Asia and in reality not much interest in all the displaced persons in Sub-Saharan Africa.

37. **Bias by Photo Choice.** A picture tells a thousand words and picture bias tells a million. We can choose a nice one of Jeremy looking either messianic or avuncular,

surrounded by happy smiling people, or we can choose one of Theresa looking very anxious (as though she's about to try swallowing something on I'm Celebrity) and isolated, with a dark sombre background. We had a nice example on the BBC News website recently: May looking worried and pensive, her frame apparently being squeezed between two EU flags that dominated the photo...and then there's Nicola Sturgeon smiling, looking very businesslike with one of her ministers carrying lots of impressive looking files...Chance choice? Of course not. Nothing happens by chance at the BBC! Photo bias is one of the easiest techniques to spot if you look for it but because people tend to take images on trust they rarely identify or comment on the bias.

38. **Bias by Placard Placement.** I rather like this one. I used to use it a lot myself back in the day. We at the BBC know we are not going to get away with a newsreader saying "The Tory fascists have decided to dismantle the NHS." But there's nothing to stop us showing a placard in a protest that says something like that: "Tory fascist scum will kill the NHS". Nothing to stop the cameraman zooming in on that as a lingering image to underline a report. When, rarely, we cover right wing protests, the placards get far less prominence, unless of course we think we've found one that is an own goal. We are quite happy to feature old eccentric people covered in Union Jacks opposing the EU in robust terms. That's an image we like to cultivate.
39. **Bias by Soft Interview.** This is a technique I think is sometimes underestimate but all staff should appreciate its importance. We particularly make use of this technique when we want to put rocket boosters on a political position we approve of. So we saw recently Blair being given the softest (and longest) of rides by Mardell because Blair was proposing one of our favourites: a Brexit Reversal Policy. We can counter accusations of bias, by claiming these are serious, in-

depth, “mission to explain” style interviews though we hardly ever accord such access to viewpoints we oppose.

40. **Bias by Celebrity Endorsement.** No! This doesn't refer to the celebrity endorsing a product but the BBC endorsing some celebrities over others. So Jim Davidson and Cliff Richard get the cold shoulder despite being very popular. People like Lily Allen know that BBC endorsement can be vital to prolonging their career lives way beyond their natural span and the we at the BBC know it is useful to have people like Lily Allen around to endorse otherwise somewhat difficult policies like “no borders”.
41. **Bias by Reality Checking.** We brought in BBC Reality Check to create a kind of alternative universe where matters of policy can be judged objectively by reference to “facts”. Of course this universe does not exist in any shape or form but it is useful to our purposes to pretend it does and that we at the BBC (alone in the UK – butt out ITV and Sky!) can objectively arbitrate such matters. Anyone who looks at BBC Reality Check can see instantly it has nothing to do with “reality” and everything to do with our policy preferences. This can be seen by (a) its choice of subject matter (Reality Check never investigate the dodgy social studies from groups like the Joseph Rowntree Trust we are so fond of quoting) (b) its concentration on “future outcomes” which by definition have not happened yet and cannot therefore form part of our “reality” and (c) its disregard for the initial starting question (you will often find the conclusion has little to do with the question!) (4) its frequent recourse to “argument from authority” – quoting their favoured sources. So, please staff, don't think that Reality Check is going undermine your reports – you can rely on it as a solid backer of everything we at the BBC are trying to achieve. We just need to give it a spurious veneer of independence and objectivity – nothing to be scared of!

42. **Bias by Absent or Abbreviated Nomenclature.** At the BBC we pride ourselves that Trump is more often Trump than President Trump whereas President Obama was nearly always President Obama, certainly for his first term – just as Thatcher was more often Thatcher than Lady Thatcher. Use of the “criminal” surname is often reserved for those perceived as “right wing” Tories. Jeremy Corbyn is much more likely to have the cosy “Jeremy” attached. Also by a kind of reverse law, titles are much inflated when the BBC wants to make use of them: so you get stuff like “Lord Shyster of Plain-Wrong, the ex Lord Chamberlain of High Office and current Chairman of the Lords Select Committee on Matters of Great Import has denounced the treatment of Calais migrants as “callous”...” Don’t worry, while we are ideological egalitarians, when it comes to pushing the agenda, a bit of peasant-like deference is on offer if it means we can push our ideas more effectively.
43. **Bias by Emotional Response.** This is where we ensure the BBC acts as emotional gatekeeper to the nation. You can cry about your factory closing down but not about your neighbourhood being changed out of all recognition by mass immigration. If you are the victim of Islamic terrorism we prefer smiling defiance to tears. But other forms of terrorism may be treated differently depending on context.
44. **Bias by Views as News.** This is something we have always practised but these days we have expanded it into all areas. A classic recent example was James Cook’s take on Trump (he doesn’t like him – what a surprise!) – a virtually 100% opinion piece appearing under the BBC News banner. Of course a lot of our BBC bias involves smuggling views into news but this refers to those blatant examples where a piece should be labelled “A Personal View” if appropriate at all (doubtful).
45. **Bias by Vox Pop.** Never underestimate the *Vox Pop*. They are a really important bias tool which you will find

used in nearly every national and local news programme. They can really put a nice spin on a story. And then there are the visuals which can add yet another layer of bias: we at the BBC are always very happy to have a pro-Brexit *vox pop* on our screen if it is delivered by an old pot-bellied bloke on a mobility scooter with a fag hanging out of his mouth, with the betting shop visible in the background. If we can encourage him to have a go at “migrants” all the better!

46. **Bias by Newspaper Review.** This is a specific technique we use to build a kind of Potemkin village of opinion out of MSM news. By using left-liberal reviewers, a left-liberal presenter and a selection of stories biased to the left-liberal view of the world, we are able create the erroneous impression that the BBC’s agenda is very much in line with that of the rest of the MSM. Where necessary the Review can be used to chastise heretical opinions deemed as offensive to PC Multiculturalist beliefs.
47. **Bias by Some-say.** Let’s be honest, it is rare for an hour to go by without a BBC presenter or reporter having recourse to that well known family “The Somes”. “But some say this belief in fundamental biologically-based differences between men and women is just petty-minded fascistic prejudice which will soon be consigned to the dustbin of history.” The Somes come in very useful to us at the BBC when we want to advance the “progressive agenda” but realise we are on tricky ground. A non-specific “some” is a nice way of suggesting support is building for a “progressive” idea. It sounds a lot better than “that mad columnist from the Guardian”. Given we live in a nation of nearly 70 million people, if you say “some” then most fair-minded people will think you mean a few hundred thousand or a few million at least, if not yet a majority, whereas it might only be that mad columnist from the *Guardian*, 12 people in Hampstead and five in Islington.

48. **Bias by History.** The past is not such a foreign country to us at the BBC. In order for the PC Multiculturalist Fantasy to be realised in the modern world the past needs to be tweaked or, worse, given the full Harvey Weinstein treatment. So, looking back at the past through our BBC-PC Telescope we see that slavery was something that was visited on Africans only by Europeans. Arabs did not enslave Africans in their millions and if they did, it wasn't really slavery. Likewise only West Europeans have engaged in imperialism. Chinese imperialism is really of no note at all. Russian imperialism likewise of virtually no importance since the end of the Cold War. Through the PC lens of history we see that Islam is a universally benign and progressive force that invented the scientific method and brought the benefits of progress to Europe, India, Africa and elsewhere. The BBC History guide can't help but be a little obsessive. So the history of the Levant 1917-1967 (no other time) is of great and enduring interest to all of us at the BBC. It is of course the time of the unjust creation and expansion of Israel as far as we are concerned. The history of Asia Minor during that same period is however of virtually no interest whatsoever to us! We have also to accept that the BBC's history can be very sentimental when we want it to be. As far as the BBC are concerned Native Americans always lived on the Plains hunting buffalo on their horses. Likewise, the Zulus of South Africa never exterminated and drove out the San people of the area in the 1600s. Weirdly although we at the BBC have this highly "romantic" approach to history elsewhere, when it comes to the UK have absolutely no time for any romanticised version of "our island story". No, then we cast a cold, callous, indifferent eye over the history of our forebears. Actually, I don't think I should say "forebears" but you know what I mean.

49. **Bias by Counterintuitive Injury Reporting.** At the BBC we

use this mostly in the context of domestic or American demonstrations. So “An EDL march took place in Rotherham today [Note – don’t mention about what!]. The march was condemned by the local Mayor who said “This Far Right rally has nothing to with our community which is peaceful and harmonious.” There were 7 injuries and 5 arrests.” The set up makes the audience think the EDL caused the injuries and that EDL supporters were arrested, when the truth is the counter-demo mob caused the injuries and were the source of the arrests. Classic result! Just what we want!! This technique can also be used with terrorism in faraway places. “Terror attack – two Palestinians dead.” No – not an attack on Palestinians by Far Right Israelis...two Palestinian terrorists shot dead while trying to carry out a terror attack. “ Likewise “70 Muslim worshippers killed in Mosque attack” might make you think the religion of Islam was yet again being persecuted by Christians or Hindus. The fact’s it’s a Sunni-Shia thing is nicely obscured.

50. **Bias by Absorption.** There are many cultural events or phenomena which we seek to make our own. Glastonbury, Turner Prize, MOB0s, Chelsea Flower Show, Women’s Football...we are like some giant amoeba, absorbing chunks of other DNA safe in the knowledge that it can replicate inside us and produce a yet more bloated version of the BBC itself. I think it’s what I would call cultural synergy. By absorbing these other cultural phenomena we make ourselves stronger and better project our cultural aims.

I hope you have enjoyed our Festive Fifty and that you now understand better how we operate. The BBC believes in transparency and connecting with its staff and the public at large. Besides we think that you are so brainwashed by now you are probably quite happy that we are so biased.

Seasonal greetings and a Happy New Year whatever calendar you choose,

Yours ever,

Tony



Photo by LoopZilla

