talent bios

Lester Holt

Anchor, "NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt"; Anchor, "Dateline NBC"

Lester Holt is an award-winning journalist and anchor of "NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt," the network's flagship broadcast and the #1 newscast in America. He also anchors "Dateline NBC," now in its 28th season, and leads NBC News' special reports, breaking news and primetime political coverage.

Coined the "most-trusted television news personality in America" by a Hollywood Reporter/Morning Consult poll, Holt was named anchor of "NBC Nightly News" in June 2015 after anchoring the weekend editions of "NBC Nightly News" for eight years and co-anchoring "Weekend TODAY" for 12 years. Holt has served as principal anchor of "Dateline NBC" since September 2011 and joined NBC News in 2000.

Holt has spent the past four decades in journalism and has reported and anchored from breaking news events across the globe. In August 2019, Holt got rare access inside Tehran, Iran, where he spoke with top diplomats and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, and prior to that, he was in Normandy for the 75th anniversary of D-Day. During the previous year, he reported from the Korean Peninsula on the growing tensions between the United States and North Korea just weeks before the 2018 Winter Olympics. Most recently, Holt has led NBC News' coverage of the coronavirus, anchoring weekly primetime specials featuring critical, real-time information on the pandemic. He also launched "Nightly News: Kids Edition," a digital newscast aimed to inform and educate children during these difficult times.

Over the past several years, Holt has reported from Manchester, Brussels and Paris on the terrorist attacks that took place across Europe. He anchored from South Africa during the Nelson Mandela memorial service, reported from Cairo on the political and civil unrest in Egypt during the Arab Spring, covered the 2010 earthquake and nuclear crisis in Japan, and reported on the immediate aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Haiti. Holt was also on the ground in Hungary during the migrant crisis in Europe in 2015 and anchored from Cuba numerous times, including during the opening of the U.S. embassy, President Barack Obama's visit and the funeral of Fidel Castro. Additionally, he was embedded with U.S. forces reporting on
One of Holt's trademarks is his on-the-ground reporting and his deep commitment to providing viewers with first-person accounts when disaster and tragedy strikes. He traveled to Southern California last year to cover the massive wildfires that caused hundreds of thousands of residents to evacuate during the statewide state of emergency. He also reported from El Paso in August 2019 on the mass shootings there and in Dayton, Ohio. He reported from Las Vegas on the Mandalay Bay shooting, providing first-person accounts of the devastation, and from Sutherland Springs, Texas after the massacre in a church took the lives of 26 people. Holt has also covered more than a dozen natural disasters, including the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. During the fall of 2017, he went to Houston and Southern Florida to get live, first-hand perspectives of the devastation caused by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

As a preeminent broadcast journalist, Holt was selected to moderate the first presidential debate of 2016, which was the most-watched debate in American history. Holt also sat down with President Trump in May 2017, which stands as one of the most consequential interviews of his presidency, after Trump told Holt the firing of former FBI head James Comey was tied to the Russia investigation. In January 2017, he traveled with President Obama on the Commander in Chief's final trip aboard Air Force One, for an in-depth interview in Chicago. He has also sat down for revealing, news-making interviews with candidates Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio and Jeb Bush. NBC News was the most watched news organization of Election 2016, with Holt anchoring all the network's primetime coverage through the Republican and Democratic conventions, debates and Election Night. And kicking off the 2020 election cycle, Holt was a co-moderator for the first Democratic debate, which made history as the most-watched Democratic debate ever.

Over the past few years, Holt has distinguished himself as the leading broadcast journalist on criminal justice reform. In 2019, he led a groundbreaking series "Justice for All" across all NBC News platforms. For the network-wide series, Holt spent three days embedded inside Louisiana State Penitentiary, the largest maximum-security prison in America, and moderated the first-ever televised town hall from a maximum-security prison at Sing Sing, all putting a bright spotlight on mass incarceration and the many complex issues around it. Additionally, in the past few years, Holt has reported on several high-profile justice-related stories and landed many exclusive interviews, including the first interview with rapper Meek Mill following his release from prison, an interview with Matthew Charles, the first person released under the First Step Act, and the first interview with Cyntoia Brown-Long since her prison release.

For "Dateline NBC," Holt has anchored numerous specials and investigative reports, such as "Life Inside," his most recent report for the "Justice for All" series. Few years prior, he worked on a story of injustice that examined the connection between childhood asthma and poverty in America. Holt also reported on wrongful convictions involving Richard Rosario and Johnny Hincapie, two cases that made national headlines. Additionally, he reported on the aftermath of the Great Recession as part of the "American Now" documentary series.

Before becoming co-anchor of "Weekend TODAY" in 2003, Holt anchored "Lester Holt Live," a daily news show on MSNBC. Holt served as a primary anchor for MSNBC’s coverage of major news events, including Operation Iraqi Freedom and the war in Afghanistan, and he was the lead daytime anchor for MSNBC's coverage of Decision 2000. Holt also served as anchor of "Countdown: Iraq," a nightly news telecast concentrating on the latest developments surrounding the war with Iraq, from October 2002 through March 2003. Holt started at NBC News in 2000, anchoring "Newsfront." While at NBC, Holt has covered every Olympics from the ground since the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.

Holt came to MSNBC after 14 years at WBBM-TV in Chicago where he served as the afternoon and evening news anchor. After studying government at California State University in Sacramento, he began his television journalism career as a reporter at WCBS-TV in New York in 1981. The following year he moved to Los Angeles to report for KCBS-TV (then KNXT) before returning to WCBS in 1984.
Holt has been recognized with numerous honors, including multiple Emmy Awards and a Robert F. Kennedy Journalism award. In 2019, he was honored with the prestigious Walter Cronkite Award for Excellence in Journalism. Two years prior in 2017, he was honored with Quinnipiac University's Fred Friendly First Amendment Award. In April 2016, Holt received several notable designations: he was featured on TIME's "100 Most Influential People" list, The Hollywood Reporter's "Most Powerful People in New York" list and was named "Journalist of the Year" by the National Association of Black Journalists.

Holt is on Twitter at @LesterHoltNBC.