

Gaming the System

Television networks have figured out how to game the Nielsen ratings system. It's as easy as playing dumb, literally.

On days when programmers know their viewership will drop, as on holiday weekends or during sporting events, they “accidentally” misspell their shows' name on the nightly Nielsen lineup, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

Over the Friday of the Memorial Day 2017 weekend, for example, NBC aired *NBC Nitely News* instead of its usual *NBC Nightly News* so the holiday drop in viewership didn't affect its ratings standing.

Nielsen's automated system counted that misspelled show as an entirely different program. By doing this, NBC managed to actually gain ratings against its main competitor, *ABC World News Tonight*.

NBC apparently misspelled its shows 14 times since the start of the 2016 to 2017 TV season, and it's not the only network to pull this tactic, according to Ashley Carman, writing for *The Verge*. ABC did so seven times with its *Wrld View Tonite*, while CBS replaced *The CBS Evening News* with *CBS Evening Nws* 12 times. Clearly, this method isn't much of a secret, although *The Wall Street Journal* points out that advertisers are catching on and are fed up with paying more for potentially disingenuous viewership counts.



Playing dumb is one way to get around the rules – a pretty effective one if you're attempting to get around the Nielsen ratings system. But it's not so effective if you're attempting to get around God's rating system.

God knows us. He knows our name. Misspelling it won't help!

And our “secret sins” are an open book to Him.

For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing will be concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open (Luke 8:17 NIV).

Solomon, in his wisdom, offered a better course: *Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out (Proverbs 10:9 ESV).*

– Beecher Hunter