



- **Technology:** Mass communication requires a vehicle, such as a television receiver, a method of printing and so forth, that allows messages to be sent and received.
- **Scale:** One feature of a mass medium, as we've noted, is it involves *simultaneous* communication with many people; for example, as I sit in my living room watching Chelsea play Manchester United on TV, the same behaviour is being reproduced in thousands of other living rooms across the country.
- **Commodity:** An interesting feature of mass communication – in our society at least – is that it comes at a price. I can watch football on TV, for example, if I can afford a television, a license fee (to watch BBC or ITV) or a subscription to something like Sky Sports if it's on satellite or cable.

WARM UP: IDENTIFYING MASS MEDIA

Using the following table as a guide, in pairs or small groups, identify as many media as possible and decide (by ticking (✓) or crossing (X) the appropriate box) whether or not they qualify as a *mass* medium (of the ones I have identified, television does qualify but the telephone, for example, doesn't).

Medium	Distance	Technology	Scale	Commodity
Television	✓	✓	✓	✓
Telephone	X	✓	X	✓
Daily newspaper	✓			✓
Mobile telephone		✓		✓
Further media?				



Digging deeper

In the above exercise, you will have found it reasonably easy to identify a range of mass media. However, I suspect you will have identified some forms of communication (such as mobile phones and email) that don't fit easily (if at all) into traditional definitions, mainly because they have the capacity to be both:

- **interpersonal** ('one-to-one') communication and
- **mass** ('one-to-many') communication.

Depending on how it is used, for example, email can involve exchanging interpersonal messages with friends and family ('Hi, how are you?') or sending one message to many thousands – potentially millions – of people; customers of on-line retailers, such as Amazon (www.amazon.co.uk), for example, can request email notification of special offers and so forth. Unrequested mass emails – commonly known as 'Spam' – also come into this category.

In defining the mass media, therefore, we have hit upon something that, as recently as 25 years ago, wouldn't have been a problem; namely, the development of *computer networks*. The ability to link computer technology (to create something like the