

Q.

Writing For Radio



The two most important things to remember when writing for radio are:

Write for the ear not the eye.

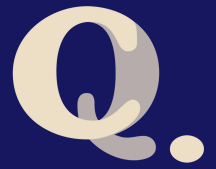
Write as you speak.

The listener will probably be doing something else whilst listening to the radio so you need to capture their attention .

The first words of a news item may well be missed so avoid putting key words right at the beginning. Don't give the whole story in the first line.

The end of the story is as important as the beginning. The last words are what the audience will remember. The last line should round off the story and point ahead to any developments.

- Only one angle per story
- One thought per sentence
- 4-5 batches of words per 30 minute piece
- Read it then write it from memory
- Who, what, when, where and how?
- Use the present or present perfect tenses
- Use active verbs
- Short sentences
- Simple language but not simplistic
- Try to use specific time references for immediacy but do not "date" your copy
- Say it out loud
- Use contractions eg: I am = I'm
- Accuracy- factually correct and keep to the facts
- Don't overload info
- Strive to be fair and impartial- objective / factual
- Tell the audience what it needs and wants to know
- Talk TO the audience not AT them
- Demystify
- No commas or dashes use ...It helps the newsreader with the sense of the piece
- Avoid adjectives unless necessary, especially if involving tautology
eg: serious danger...brutal murder
- Avoid Jargon - use lay-terms
- Avoid clichés
- Avoid repetition of words, find another way of saying it



The role of someone is almost always more important than their name eg:

"Council Chairman XXX..." Rather than "XXX the Council Chair man".

Plural vs single nouns eg:

The council has... (not "have"). Be Consistent.

Sport teams are always plural.

Collective nouns can take singular or plural so check with your editor.

Use of initials:

Always say the name in full at first mention...

"The Confederation of Industry..." Then subsequently you can use the initials

"The CBI..."

You can sometimes get away with...

"The Train drivers Union, the RMT..." (Useful for long union names such as ASLEF etc).

Phonetic spelling of names should be in brackets after the original word with capital letters for the stressed syllable. Eg: Putin (POO-tin).

Use of Numbers:

Do not mix percentages with fractions in the same piece. Comparisons only make sense if the are expressed in the same format.

Do not use too many as it can be difficult to take on board.

Use terms people can relate to- dimensions / weight.

Write out all numbers in full, ONE million not A million

Notes:

When you attribute a source, make it wither the subject of the story or mention in the second phrase, especially if it gives weight to the story.

Make a note of any unusual names and learn them.

Find a different way to introduce a report or reporter.

If you have a Newsroom style guide-use it.