

Writing for Radio + Newscast

Keep it simple. Keep it clear. Keep it conversational.

This week, you will be learning how to write short, concise stories for newscast. Don't be fooled – newscast spots/wraps/scripts are among the most important stories radio reporters are asked to do. They are short, to the point and timely.

Spot – host lede, reporter story (As Devin Katayama reports,.....)

Cut/Script – the host reads lede and plays a short clip

Reader – host reads

Voicer – host reads lede, reporter voices the story

- Write like you speak. If it sounds awkward, change it.
- Make the lede/lead short and to the point.
- Keep the news up top (Don't bury the lede).
- Keep clips short and interesting
- GET BOTH SIDES

WRITING FOR THE EAR:

- Speak like you talk
- If it sounds awkward, change it
- Write in present tense: She says...; Environmental groups are rallying....
- When time permits, paint the scene.
- Let people know what they're listening to.
- Think about writing a movie script.
- Writing should have cadence, rhythm.

LEDE/LEAD

- Keep the news up top
- Keep it short
- What's happening now – PRESENT tense, Active voice
- As Devin Katayama with KQED reports, the governor's decision comes today....

- KQED's Devin Katayama reports.

ACTION: 3 examples

BODY

- 100-150 words
- Keep titles short: Bob Fleshman is a supervisor in the finance department of the Administrative Division of the Judicial Council of California. Bob Fleshman is the administrator overseeing the roll out of California's new traffic amnesty program.
- You CAN fit both sides of a story in the story – MAKE SURE YOU DO.
- You can spend HOURS on one story. Don't be frustrated when your story gets cut for length (that's also what editors are for)

From the [International Journalists Network](#)

- **Write like you speak**: Write in your own voice, in a conversational tone, as if you're speaking to only one listener. Keep sentences short. If you have a long sentence, follow it up with a short one. When you go back and read your narration aloud, do you truly sound like yourself?
- **Keep it simple**: Allot a sentence to each idea. Be clear and concise, stick to the story and don't try too hard to be "clever." Too much detail can become irrelevant and make the story lose focus. Avoid most multiple-syllable words, words that are tough to pronounce and long, convoluted sentences. "Treasure small words," Dillon says.
- **Provide specificity**: Although the goal is to write clearly, you must also avoid being too general. Dillon says reporters should provide context for anything that may cause confusion or "raise eyebrows." When describing people, don't label them. Tell exactly what they do as opposed to using their official title.
- **Tell stories in a logical order**: Make sure that your content has a beginning, a middle and an ending. Don't bury the lead; state the news near the top, without too much buildup.
- **Use the present tense and active voice**: You're writing for flow and to express what is going on now. Broadcast strives for immediacy. To convey this to the listener, use the active voice whenever possible. In English, try to use a subject-verb-object sentence structure. For example: "Police (subject) have arrested (verb) 21 activists (object) for staging a protest at Merlion Park on Saturday afternoon."
- **Write to the pictures**: TV and video audiences will *see* why something happened. In television, the phrase "write to tape" is used to describe the way a story script is built around the visual images you have gathered. Don't write any longer than the story or pictures warrant.

- **Use imagery:** Radio audiences need to *imagine* the people, places and things in your story. With your words, create powerful and straightforward imagery. Use descriptive verbs instead of adjectives. For example, if you say “he struts or saunters” you’re giving a picture without using an adjective. But don’t let vivid, imagery-rich writing turn verbose. Use words sparingly.
- **Let the speaker speak:** If you’re hosting a show or an interview, be the host. Don’t overpower the subject of the story. When interviewing, “Don’t ‘mm hmm’ them and don’t keep talking and talking about yourself,” Irani says. “You’re just a conduit whose job it is to relay a story/experience/emotion from the guest to the audience.”