



WRITING AUDIO STORIES

Chapters 8 and 9

“All the News: Writing and
Reporting for Convergent Media”

Multimedia Reporting Course

AUDIO STORY WRITING DIFFERENCES

- ▶ Just as print and online writers follow a standard style, so do audio (and video) writers. Appendix B, pages 322-326, covers the basic rules
- ▶ Sentences tend to be short and contain no more than one idea each
- ▶ Sentence fragments are acceptable (when conversational). Story about growing airport security lines: “Bad news for the nation’s vacationers.”
- ▶ Audio stories focus on people, not things, events, policies or statistics- focus on people directly affected by the events of a story
- ▶ Audio story leads contain fewer details- shorter leads help audience comprehension because the ear (and brain) can only process so much information at once. And there’s only so much a broadcaster can read before running out of breath. Leads should offer one key fact and feature just one or two of the 5 Ws and H elements
- ▶ Audio leads place a higher premium on action- use active voice and descriptive verbs (but avoid exaggerating). Example: page 147

LEADS AND STORY STRUCTURE

- ▶ Audio and broadcast leads tend to be the same kinds as print leads
- ▶ They are hard news/summary leads, soft/feature leads, umbrella leads
- ▶ Many broadcast leads are updated- daily hourly newscasts, for example, providing new information, the latest developments with ongoing stories
- ▶ Story structure is similar to the print inverted pyramid formula
- ▶ But because people cannot skip ahead to the next story (radio/TV) the stories need to hang together from start to finish
- ▶ Think of it as a “logical order” format- try to anticipate the listener/viewer’s next question and answer it in turn
- ▶ Look at story example on page 151
- ▶ Chronological order can be the best way if the timeline is important
- ▶ Transition word and phrases help connect one point with another and are critical in guiding the listener through even simple stories
- ▶ See list of transition words on page 153 and story example, page 154

AUDIO STORY ENDING TYPES

- ▶ Summary/main point close-
 - ▶ restates central point
 - ▶ good for complex stories that include a lot of information
 - ▶ don't use same words as lead, instead restate the same idea in another way
- ▶ Future ramification close- most common ending that gives the audience a peek into what is likely to happen next
- ▶ Information close-
 - ▶ provides additional information that is related to what's already been reported in the story
 - ▶ can tell people how to take action/get involved
- ▶ Opposition POV (point of view) close- often used in stories with controversial topics, it's a chance for the writer to present "the other side of the story"
- ▶ Punch line close- for lighter, feature stories designed to leave the audience smiling, upbeat

AUDIO/VIDEO (RADIO/TV) NEWS TERMS

- ▶ Radio Story Types: readers, voicers, wraps/wraparounds, live reports
- ▶ TV News Story Types: readers, voice-overs (VOs), voice-over sound-on-tape (VO/SOTS), packages, live reports
- ▶ Sound bites/actualities- equal to print quotes; add variety, emotional impact, credibility; also known as SOTs
- ▶ Incue: on scripts, the two or three words that begin a sound bite
- ▶ Outcue: on scripts, the two or three words that end a sound bite
- ▶ Audio tracks- reporter's narrative
- ▶ Voice over- anchor or reporter speaking over video
- ▶ A-roll- old film term for audio tracks
- ▶ B-roll- term still used as name for the shots taken and used to visually tell the video story; not the same as soundbites
- ▶ Nat sound- the ambient sounds that help a listener/viewer better "feel" and experience the story
- ▶ Sound bites let us directly hear from (and see) the people who make our laws, police our streets, etc.
- ▶ They let us hear the voices of people affected by tragedies, crime and changes in the law
- ▶ Key question that the writer/reporter should ask in determining which- if any- sound bites to use in a story: "How will the actualities help listeners better understand or envision my story?"

RECORDING INTERVIEWS

- ▶ Whether recording only audio or both audio and video (TV interviews) be sure to do so in a quiet place, as free of background sounds and noise as possible
- ▶ But sometimes the background sound enhances the interview- sirens blaring at a fire, protestors chanting at a demonstration- but make sure the sounds do not overwhelm the interview
- ▶ Always good to use headphones to monitor audio quality
- ▶ Immediately after an interview, play back some of it to make sure it's there and that the audio and video qualities are good
- ▶ Get microphones (external or built in mics) six-to-12 inches from subject to ensure high voice quality- too far away voice will sound distant and will pick up “room noise”
- ▶ For TV/video interviews, shot composition is very important (see postings)

ADDING ACTUALITIES AND WRITING THE WRAPAROUND STORY

- ▶ Select sound bites that convey opinion, emotion, color, personality, or that expand or expound on an issue- do not use them to convey routine facts that you as the writer/reporter can say
- ▶ “Writing in” to sound bites is an important technique- the two parts should complement each other
- ▶ For live radio and TV, it should be written so that the story can be understood should technical problems occur and the SOT not play
- ▶ Do not write lead ins to SOTs so that the SOT repeats what you wrote and said leading to it. This “echo” effect wastes time (example page 169)
- ▶ Radio/audio wrap or wraparound stories are the most common form
- ▶ Name comes from its form: begins with live or recorded narration by an anchor or reporter, then we hear one or more sound bites, then returns to the anchor or reporter to finish the story