

Topic # 1

News for radio

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Definition of news for radio

- This is the description or narration of the basics elements of a story and, if necessary, a brief explanation
- It is the easiest way to tell something without attempting to express an opinion
- On the “[news values](#)”

Requirements when writing news for radio

- Clarity
- Understandability
- Brevity
- Accuracy
- Simplicity

The structure of news for radio

- Opening
- Lead
- Body
- Closing

The structure of news for radio

- Opening:
 - It is the first sentence
 - It has to:
 - Place the listener in the time and space where the news occurs
 - Grab the listener's attention
 - It must be attractive (hook)
- Lead:
 - It corresponds to the second sentence.
 - It includes the most relevant elements of the story.
 - Unlike press, it is not necessary to meet the five ws, only the most important ones
 - It depends on the kind of news: event news, character news

The structure of news for radio

- Body:
 - This is the most extensive part
 - It includes the rest of the facts that were not answered in the lead
 - It has nothing to do with the inverted pyramid
 - It also usually includes the “how”
- Closing:
 - This is the final sentence
 - It’s usually in longer news
 - It summarizes the essence of the news or presents what is coming up

Tips when producing news for radio

[From: BBC Academy. College of Journalism]

- 1) Know what you want to say!

Tips when producing news for radio

2) Keep it simple!

— Avoid misunderstanding

- “For the second time in six months, a prisoner at Durham jail has died after hanging himself in his cell”
- “A suicide bomber has struck again in Jerusalem”

Tips when producing news for radio

3) Simple thoughts, simply expressed

- One sentence one idea
- Do not try to express the whole idea of the news in just one sentence
- Short sentences and short words

Tips when producing news for radio

4) The basic sentence structure Subject-Verb-Complement works every time!

- The audience grasps what you are saying straight away
- NOT: “With what his political opponents called a leap in the dark, the Prime Minister today committed Britain to a European daylight saving regime”
- Aim to be simple, fluent and easy on the ear.

Tips when producing news for radio

5) Broadcasting is all about the spoken word

- In real life, people do not say “Liverpool and England striker Michael Owen”, or “former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher”, or “Microsoft boss” Bill Gates
- In conversation they would always use the definite article, and so should we

Tips when producing news for radio

6) Don't judge!

- Do not describe news as good, bad, shocking or horrendous
- Tell the story and let the listener decide

Tips when producing news for radio

7) Do not frighten off your audience

- One presenter began his program by declaring that many people thought parliamentary reform was boring, but he was still going to talk about it...

Tips when producing news for radio

8) Try to get a strong active verb in the first sentence

You want to make an impact
and keep people listening

Tips when producing news for radio

9) Do not begin a story with As expected....

-If your item is predictable, why should the listener pay attention?

Tips when producing news for radio

10) Be positive

- Make assertions wherever possible
- Try to avoid negatives

NOT: The plan was not successful

YES: The plan failed

Tips when producing news for radio

11) With abbreviations and acronyms

-Assume nothing

- Just because you know what NACRO means, it doesn't follow that the majority of your audience know
- Some short forms such as NATO, CIA, BBC, ITV, AA and RAC are well known and need no explanation, but think twice before using others

Tips when producing news for radio

12) Active voice is usually better than passive

- Try to write sentences with subjects that are doing things, and not subjects that are simply receiving actions upon them
- NOT: A meeting will be held by the company's directors next week
- YES: The company's directors will meet next week.
- Active voice provide vitality and life

Tips when producing news for radio

12) Active voice is usually better than passive

NOT: There were riots in several towns in Northern England last night, in which police clashed with stone-throwing youths

YES: Youths throwing stones clashed with police during riots in several towns in Northern England last night

Tips when producing news for radio

12) Active voice is usually better than passive

- Sometimes, though, the passive is better

ACTIVE: A rhinoceros trampled on Prince Edward at a safari park today

PASSIVE: Prince Edward was trampled on by a rhinoceros at a safari park today

Tips when producing news for radio

13) Avoid expressions like *there is, there are*

- They are overused

- Why waste time stating that something exists when you could get on and describe the action?

Tips when producing news for radio

14) Attribution first

- Broadcasters should always identify the source of an assertion before making it
- Always say who before you say what they said or did
- On attribution check also:
 - [Reported speech explanation](#)
 - [Reported speech exercises](#)

Tips when producing news for radio

14) Attribution first

- EXAMPLE: The British economy is on the verge of collapse and unless the Chancellor hits the taxpayer hard in his next budget we will experience the worst depression since the 1930s. That's the view of a Luxembourg-based bank which has carried out a review of economic trends in Europe
- The listener is in no position to make a judgement on the validity of the assertion until they know who is making it

Tips when producing news for radio

15) Avoid clichés

“By using stale metaphors, similes and idioms, you save much mental effort, at the cost of leaving your meaning vague, not only for your reader but for yourself”

– [George Orwell](#)

Tips when producing news for radio

15) Avoid clichés

- The regular use of predictable words and phrases indicates a lack of thought and effort
- **EXAMPLES:**
 - a question mark hangs over
 - conspicuous by its absence
 - leaves much to be desired
 - leave no stone unturned
 - quiet but tense moving the goalposts

Tips when producing news for radio

15) Avoid clichés

EXAMPLES

- full-scale search
- level playing field
- the bottom line
- armed to the teeth
- spread like wildfire
- calm before the storm
- horns of a dilemma
- wealth of experience

Tips when producing news for radio

15) Avoid clichés

EXAMPLES

- in the final analysis
- shrouded in mystery
- reign of terror
- last-ditch effort
- rushed to the scene
- vanished into thin air
- beginning of the end

Tips when producing news for radio

15) Avoid clichés

- The words and phrases in these lists are not banned
- There will be occasions when you choose to use some of them, but at least be aware that, when you do, you are using second-rate writing
- [Most hated clichés](#)
- [20 of your most hated clichés \(BBC\)](#)

Tips when producing news for radio

16) Collective nouns

- Take into account that they can be be either singular or plural (Government)
- Use whichever sounds best in context, depending on whether the organisation is seen as a singular entity or as a collection of individuals
- On collective nouns check also these [tips](#)

Tips when producing news for radio

16) Collective nouns: examples

- YES: The committee park their cars in the field
- NO: The committee parks its cars

- YES: The committee has decided to ban cars from the field
- NO: The committee have decided to ban cars from the field

Tips when producing news for radio

16) Collective nouns: examples

- YES: The Cabinet are discussing education
- NO: The Cabinet is discussing education
- YES: The Cabinet is determined to push through the changes
- NO: The Cabinet are determined to push through the changes

Tips when producing news for radio

16) Collective nouns

- Be consistent!
- NO: The jury was out for three hours, before they reached their verdict.
- NO: The company has issued a profits warning which could have a serious impact on their shares.
- NO: A team of scientists has arrived in Hong Kong. They will start their investigations into the outbreak of smallpox tomorrow.

Tips when producing news for radio

16) Collective nouns

- In sports, teams are always plural
- YES: England are expected to beat the Balearic Islands
- YES: Tranmere Rovers have extended their lead at the top of the Premiership

Tips when producing news for radio

17) Be aware of the exact meaning of each word!

- NOT: A boy of twelve is in intensive care in hospital after a group of teenagers doused him in inflammatory liquid and then threw a lighted match at him (it should be flammable)
- NOT: The union's decision will mitigate against a settlement (it should be militate)

Tips when producing news for radio

17) Be aware of the exact meaning of each word!

- Affect/effect
- Alternate/alternative
- Biannual/biennial
- Continual/continuous
- Dependent/dependant

Tips when producing news for radio

17) Be aware of the exact meaning of each word!

- Disinterested/uninterested
- Distinctive/distinguished
- Fortuitous/fortunate

Tips when producing news for radio

17) Be aware of the exact meaning of each word!

- Meter/metre
- Practical/practicable
- Principle/principal
- Regretful/regrettable
- Resistant/resilient
- Stationary/stationery

Tips when producing news for radio

- 18) Remember that cue (opening + lead) and piece (body + closing) are part of a whole
- Use different words to express the same and to avoid exact repetition, like in:
 - CUE: The supermarket chain, Tesco, has announced a major expansion in its operations. It says it will be creating twenty thousand new jobs worldwide – eight thousand of them in the UK. Here's Justin Thyme:
 - THYME: Tesco is creating twenty thousand new jobs worldwide – twelve thousand in Central Europe and Asia and eight thousand in this country ...

Tips when producing news for radio

19) Be creative at the end of radio cues

- Avoid ending every radio cue with Justin Thyme reports, or even worse Our reporter Justin Thyme reports
- There are lots of ways of getting into and out of a piece
- Use your imagination

Tips when producing news for radio

20) Avoid confusion!

- NOT: If found guilty, the Football Association could fine the Arsenal players
- NOT: After eating my lunch, the waiter engaged me in conversation

Tips when producing news for radio

21) Don't be afraid of using the definite article

- It sounds more natural and conversational
- Write for the ear!
- NOT: Greek minister of culture Evangelos Venizelos has made another call for the return of the Parthenon marbles
- NOT : Publicist Max Clifford says the Princess's full story will never be told
- NOT: Scottish distillers George & JG Smith have revealed encouraging half-year profits

Tips when producing news for radio

22) Be aware of the proper pronunciation!

- Specially with names of people, places and organisations
- People get annoyed when they hear a name they know well mispronounced
- Use help at hand
 - <http://es.forvo.com/>
 - [A free online Talking Dictionary of English Pronunciation](#)
 - [100 Most Often Mispronounced Words and Phrases in English](#)

Tips when producing news for radio

23) Don't be afraid of splitting the infinitive if it sounds better and is easier to understand

- YES: Can dot.com companies ever hope to fully recover their share values?

Tips when producing news for radio

24) Try to avoid foreign phrases

- It sounds pretentious
- You may know what they mean, but some of the people you are broadcasting to will not
- Besides, it could introduce mistakes

Tips when producing news for radio

24) Try to avoid foreign phrases

- Some foreign words, are so established as to be familiar, but if you are writing for a general audience, think twice before you include them
- ad hoc
- ad infinitum
- amour-propre
- de facto
- ipso facto

Tips when producing news for radio

24) Try to avoid foreign phrases

- per capita
- per se
- sine qua non
- sui generis
- vade-mecum
- vox pop
- On the meaning of some foreign phrases this [list](#) can be consulted

Tips when producing news for radio

25) Avoid jargon!

- It is not always easy because jargon is everywhere
- However, try to reduce it as much as possible and to substitute it for simple language
- NOT: They can charge more because of tight supply and demand
- YES: Prices are going up because demand is high and supplies are low.

Tips when producing news for radio

26) Try to avoid numbers

- Radio's strengths are immediacy and story-telling
- However, it is a poor medium for dealing with numbers because we can not count on images

Tips when producing news for radio

26) Try to avoid numbers

NOT!: Unions representing the 1,497 clerical and maintenance workers at Oxbridge University have rejected a plan to freeze wages. University officials wanted the unions to delay their agreed three-point-two-five per cent pay rise to help the college deal with an estimated deficit of two-point-seven-three million pounds. Although there have been warnings of job cuts if the wage freeze is not accepted, staff voted against the proposal by 1,049 to 109, with 339 failing to vote.

Tips when producing news for radio

26) Try to avoid numbers

YES: Unions representing fifteen hundred clerical and maintenance workers at Oxbridge University have rejected a plan to freeze wages. University officials wanted the unions to delay an agreed pay rise to help the college deal with an estimated deficit of more than two and a half million pounds. Although there have been warnings of job cuts if the wage freeze is not accepted, staff voted overwhelmingly against the proposal

Tips when producing news for radio

26) Try to avoid numbers

- EXPLANATION: A story with too many figures numbs the listener
- Simplify wherever you can, round up or down, and try to tell the story without getting bogged down in numbers

Tips when producing news for radio

27) Never start a piece of news with a figure

- If you are dealing with a numbers story on radio, (the latest employment figures), it is a good idea to write an opening sentence without any detail
- Select a trend to the figures as a way of signalling that big numbers are coming up
- If the listener is prepared, there's a better chance of achieving comprehension

Tips when producing news for radio

28) Do not mix decimals, fractions and percentages in one story

- Listeners do not listen to it with a handy calculator!
- Keep it simple!
- On numbers see also “[Writing with numbers](#)”

Tips when producing news for radio

29) Be very careful with names and positions!

- Accuracy!
- It damages our credibility and reputation if we do not correctly identify the people or organizations we are writing about.
- If in doubt, try to confirm with the person concerned :“I want to make sure I get this right. Can you confirm your full title for me, please?”

Tips when producing news for radio

30) Be careful with the tenses in reported or indirect speech

- The best thing is to use direct speech (audio)
- However, reported speech is also very used in radio, to summarize what was said
- The tense is always one step more in the past

Tips when producing news for radio

31) Be sensitive

- Specially when referring to women, ethnic minorities, disabilities, religious groups, sexual orientation and older
- Tips:
 - Use common sense
 - Provide this information only if it is relevant to the story
- Cfr.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines/>

Tips when producing news for radio

32) Read out loud your news before finishing it

- As you write, you should appreciate that sentences have balance and rhythm
- Avoid internal rhymes
- Avoid that all your sentences have the same rhythm
- Vary the length of your sentences
- Avoid things difficult to pronounce
 - “The Navy’s provision of efficient ships”
 - “She dismissed this as a myth...”

Tips when producing news for radio

33) Be careful with the negatives

- Do not risk misunderstanding by using contractions
- If the negative is important, spell it out loud
- Ex:
 - NO: The High Court has ruled that social workers **weren't** to blame for a child's death
 - YES: The High Court has ruled that social workers **were not** to blame for a child's death

Tips when producing news for radio

34) Avoid too many similar sounds together

- For instance, sibilance, the unpleasant hissing sound which comes with too many s's.
- Careful with sentences like:
 - Swiss police have stopped and searched sixteen Swedish sailors suspected of smuggling ceramics from Spain.
- Read the script out loud!

Tips when producing news for radio

35) Be careful when using superlatives!

- Ex: unique, sole, first, last, unprecedented , largest, longest, exclusive, most, record, heaviest
- The audience is an enormous reservoir of information
- Are you absolutely confident that you are right?
- Do not try to add impact to your story by using superlatives you cannot justify
- If possible, it is better to attribute claims
 - A Bridlington man has made what he says is the world's biggest model of the Empire State Building using only matchsticks.

Tips when producing news for radio

36) Use short words

Fewer obstacles to comprehension

- NOT manufacture BUT make
- NOT assistance BUT help
- NOT numerous BUT many
- NOT approximately BUT about
- NOT remuneration BUT pay
- NOT commence BUT start
- NOT exceedingly BUT very
- NOT attempt BUT try
- NOT discontinue BUT stop

Tips when producing news for radio

36) Use short words

- NOT magnitude BUT size
- NOT possesses BUT has
- NOT purchase BUT buy
- NOT requested BUT asked
- NOT apprehend BUT catch
- NOT subsequently BUT later

Tips when producing news for radio

36) Use short words

- NOT terminate BUT end
- NOT ascertain BUT learn
- NOT utilise BUT use
- NOT residence BUT home
- NOT ameliorate BUT improve

Tips when producing news for radio

37) Be careful with some troublesome words

- Sometimes used as interchangeable but in fact they are not
- Ex: anticipate and expect
- Ex: assassination and murder
- Ex: crescendo and climax
- Ex: desinterested and uninterested
- Ex: to execute and to murder
- Ex: historic and historical

Tips when producing news for radio

38) Be careful with some troublesome words

- Ex: to infer and to imply
- Ex: refute and deny, disagree
- Ex: viable and feasible
- Other words are troublesome because they are tendentious
 - Ex: modernisation, reform, ethnic cleansing, etc.

Tips when producing news for radio

39) Avoid superfluous words and phrases

- NOT At this moment in time BUT now
- NOT By virtue of the fact that BUT because
- NOT In the absence of BUT without
- NOT Made good their escape BUT escaped
- NOT Leaves much to be desired BUT poor
- NOT Was of the opinion that BUT thought

Tips when producing news for radio

39) Avoid superfluous words and phrases

- NOT Put in an appearance BUT appeared
- NOT On account of the fact that BUT because
- NOT In conjunction with BUT and
- NOT A large proportion of BUT many
- NOT Placed under arrest BUT arrested
- NOT In the event that BUT if
- NOT With the exception of BUT except

Tips when producing news for radio

40) Avoid also redundant phrases

- NOT Added bonus BUT bonus
- NOT New innovation BUT innovation
- NOT Surrounded on all sides BUT surrounded
- NOT Red in colour BUT red
- NOT Razed to the ground BUT razed
- NOT Exactly the same BUT the same
- NOT Close proximity BUT close
- NOT Free gift BUT gift

Tips when producing news for radio

40) Avoid also redundant phrases

- NOT In the field of biology BUT in biology
- NOT Collaborate together BUT collaborate
- NOT Temporary reprieve BUT reprieve
- NOT Consensus of opinion BUT consensus
- NOT Personal opinion BUT opinion
- NOT Oblong in shape BUT oblong
- NOT Future plans BUT plans
- NOT Close scrutiny BUT scrutiny
- NOT Minute detail BUT detail

Tips when producing news for radio

40) Avoid also redundant phrases

- NOT Shorter in length BUT shorter
- NOT Prior experience BUT experience
- NOT Combine together BUT combine
- NOT Revert back BUT revert
- NOT Patently obvious BUT obvious
- NOT Exact replica BUT replica

The END

Thank you very much for your attention