

BROADCASTING

- I. Process of making a script (ie. how to effectively use 30 minutes)
- II. Content (ie. what to write, and how to write it)
- III. Delivery

As in many skills, expertise in broadcasting is attained through practice. This guide will help you get started, but the most valuable help will come to you in the form of experience. After going to numerous tournaments, experimenting with different styles, and listening to others perform, you will establish your own style. This guide is meant only to help you with the technicalities of broadcasting; it alone will not make you a successful broadcaster.

Good luck!

PROCESS OF MAKING A SCRIPT

The 30 minutes given to you to prepare the script and practice your speech may seem like a very short time, but if you utilize this time in an efficient manner you will see that you need no more than 30 minutes to produce a quality script.

The first step in the process of making a script is to choose and cut your stories. Story selection is an area that judges very often try to penalize you on. When choosing stories there are a number of things you need to keep in mind:

- You generally want about 3 international stories, 3 national stories, 2 local stories, and 1 sports/entertainment story. Make sure you do not choose too many local stories and just a couple international stories (think inverted pyramid).
- When choosing stories, do not read through them completely – this is time consuming. You just need to scan the first couple lines to determine whether or not you need a specific story.
- Remember to include relevant stories that appeal to the audience. For example, if you need to choose between a story about the Palestinian/Israeli conflict and a story about the energy crisis in Luxemburg, you would choose the first story. Try to avoid stories with a lot of numbers in them (ie. Stories about the stock market). Performing these stories is tedious (and a bit of a pain) for you, and sleep-inducing for the judges.
- When possible, do not include two stories on the same topic, even if one is an international story and one is a national story. For obvious reasons, this shows a lack of effort in terms of attaining diverse story selection.
- If you are in doubt about which stories to use and which not to use, cut more than you need. You can decide later which ones fit best into your script. Do not spend a lot of time deliberating on whether or not to cut a story; time is precious – save it for writing and practicing.

As you cut and paste your stories, look at their lengths. Remember, you will not be reciting more than 30-45 seconds of a given story. If a story is more than 3-4 paragraphs long, cut off the rest of it. This will help you keep your script concise and prevent you from spending too much time on one story during the actual broadcast. The one exception to this rule is the editorial story. Many times, the “meat” of the editorial is in the middle or towards the end of the story. If the editorial is long, keep it, read the entire thing, figure out which parts you need to include, and then cut the rest.

You should not spend more than 5-7 minutes (this time decreases with experience) cutting and pasting your stories. The majority of the 30 minutes needs to be spent writing the transitions and editorial and practicing the broadcast.

After you cut and paste the stories, spend 10-12 minutes writing the transitions and editorial. If you can't think of a witty transition right off the bat, skip it and go on to the next one. One of worst (yet most common ways) to waste time is to spend too much time on one specific line while you could be working on the rest of the script.

The remaining time (about 10 minutes) should be spent practicing the script. During this time you want accomplish a few things:

- Memorize the introduction and conclusion. Eye contact is one of the most important aspects of a broadcast. It is key to start and end impressively (full eye contact with the judges) even if the rest of the broadcast is mediocre. Practice maintaining a smile and cheery disposition during these points in the broadcast (if you can, practice your script in front of a window so you can see your reflection).
- Time your editorial. Make sure that it is around 1 minute. If it is too short or too long, the judges may penalize you. Because it is written by you, you can spend this practice time adding in a couple sentences to increase time or cutting out some stuff to decrease time.
- Get a feel for your stories. Determine how much of each story you are going to read in order to hit 5 minutes. If you practice enough, you will memorize some of the lines in the stories. Figure out which words need emphasis and which ones are hard to pronounce (judges will notice mispronounced words – they stick out like a sore thumb). If you come across a name that is hard to pronounce, omit it (say, “the president of China” instead of, “Hu Jintao”). If you decide to include it, do not stumble over it. If you say it with confidence, there is a good chance the judge will believe you know what you’re talking about.
- Memorize your transitions and editorial. Because you wrote these, they are easier to memorize than the stories.
- For more details on delivery of the broadcast, see “Delivery”

CONTENT (writing)

A. INTRODUCTION

- Most people include headlines in their introduction. This is the most intelligent way to begin your broadcast. There are two basic formats for the introduction:
 1. “Good morning, and welcome....Making the headlines today:
HEADLINE 1
HEADLINE 2
HEADLINE 3

 2. *HEADLINE 1*
HEADLINE 2
HEADLINE 3
“These are just a few of today’s headlines. Good morning and welcome...”

- Both these ways work well. Choose one format to use in your broadcasts, and stick to it. The more consistent this part of your broadcast is, the easier it will be for you to memorize it.

- The important thing to remember is that your introduction must flow well. Practice it many times, making sure you can say the couple lines which are not the headlines without stumbling. The words should not run into each other (remember to enunciate!!!).

- Headlines!!!! Because the headlines are one of the first things the judges hear, they need to be captivating.
 - First of all, you should have one international headline, one national headline, and one local headline, in that order. The story you lead off with should be your first headline.
 - The headlines should be catchy. For example, you may want to say, “Violence erupts in Angora” as opposed to “There is fighting in Angora.” Do not make your headlines too long, as you do not want your introduction to exceed 30-45 seconds.
 - Sometimes, the script that is given to you contains headlines for each of the stories. Even though these may be catchy, it is not a good idea to use them because other people in your round may use them as well. You want to stand apart and show your creativity as much as possible.

B. TRANSITIONS

Transitions are one of the most important aspects of broadcasting for a number of reasons. When a judge is having a hard time deciding which of two competitors should

get the higher rank, he/she may use transitions as the deciding factor. Also, if transitions are written and performed well, they will set you apart from the rest of the competitors. Here are a couple tips for writing high quality transitions.

- Make your transitions story-specific. Simply, the transition should be a sentence that somehow connects the two stories together. Even if the two stories are unrelated, use your creativity and connect them. Some examples...
 - “As war rages on in Iraq, the Philippines suffer from violence as well.”
 - “Well, things aren’t looking good for Timothy McVeigh, and they are looking no better for Martha Stewart.”

- If you can’t relate the two stories, be creative. Use alliteration, rhyming, anything to create witty transitions. Some examples...
 - “And back here in the US, a crisis in California creates controversy.”
 - “Ladies and gentlemen, Elvis has left the building...literally! A million dollar Elvis poster was stolen from the national gallery yesterday.”

While transitions can positively influence your broadcast, they can also hurt you a lot. Avoid “cheesy” transitions (“And back here in the big mitten...” or “Making news in the land of red, white, and blue...”) – in general, judges will penalize you if you use them.

C. EDITORIAL

The editorial, especially at tournaments late in the season, is the most important part of the broadcast. It shows your ability to think quickly and critically, as well as your knowledge of current events. For the most part, the editorial topics will not be obscure. The most important thing to remember is you need to formulate a clear thesis and use concrete evidence to support that thesis.

- Don’t write the editorial before reading the story in its entirety. Many times, the point of the story, the part you need to form an opinion about, is in the middle or end of the article. After you read the article, pick an argument. If you have no clear opinions on the editorial topic, pick the argument for which you have the most evidence.
- After you know the point you are going to argue, formulate a thesis. In school, we are generally taught to use “three-pronged” theses; in broadcasting, you usually only have time for a “two-pronged” thesis. Using the evidence from the article and knowledge you have from beforehand, write your thesis and supports.
- Gather your evidence from newspapers, magazines, television, and radio before the tournaments. You cannot rely on just the evidence in the editorial story. You may even want to make a tub (like the extempers) with articles about current events – you can use it when writing your editorial.

- The introduction and conclusion of the editorial should be short. You only have one minute, and most of that time should be spent arguing, not stating and restating your thesis.
- Include a disclaimer (“These are the opinions of this reporter and not the opinions of this station.”). Even though this may seem like a redundant statement, many judges will mark down a broadcaster who does not include a disclaimer.

D. CONCLUSION

Go out with a bang! As I stated earlier, you want to start and end on a good note. Your conclusion should be more upbeat than the rest of the broadcast. You may want to include weather in your conclusion, so you don’t have to learn different weather stories for each broadcast (you are allowed to create your own weather conditions).

There is no specific formula for writing the conclusion. A sample one is, “Well, that’s it for the news today. Thanks for tuning in and have a great day. For WGHS, I’m...”. Make sure you can tweak the conclusion so that you can add or subtract a couple seconds from it in order to land right on 5 minutes.

DELIVERY

So you now know how to write a broadcast...but what about actually performing it? There are many things you need to keep in mind while delivering a broadcast.

- **EYE CONTACT! EYE CONTACT! EYE CONTACT!** You need to make as much eye contact as possible with the judges. Memorize your introduction and conclusion, and try to memorize the majority of your transitions and editorial. After you practice the broadcast a couple times, you will end up memorizing some of the lines in the stories.

Even though eye contact is very important, do not become obsessed with it. If you think you have lines memorized, but you really don't, you will end up stumbling and losing your place. It is better to look at your paper and speak smoothly than it is to look at your judge and stumble over every other word.

- **Inflection.** Just as important as eye contact, or even a bit more, is voice inflection. During morose stories, your voice should be dark. During more upbeat stories, your voice should be perky. Within stories, you can also vary your inflection. For example, look at the sentence, "Twenty civilians were killed and 50 more injured yesterday in a suicide bombing on the West Bank." You may want to place emphasis in the following manner, "*Twenty* civilians were *killed* and *50* more injured yesterday in a suicide bombing on the West Bank." Make sure your voice flows naturally. If your performance sounds forced, you may be marked down by the judges.

Use your prep time to underline and highlight words and phrases you want to emphasize. If a sentence is too long or if you can't find a place to take breath during the sentence, cut it down or even remove the entire thing.

Your editorial voice should be different from your broadcasting voice. You need to show the judges that you really believe in what you are saying. While broadcasting a story, your voice should be very crisp. While giving your editorial, you can talk in a more conversational (but not too casual) tone.

- **Facial expressions.** Inflection is good, but if you have a blank stare on your face while showing off your vocal variety, your work may go to waste. Your facial expressions should correspond to the mood of the story (ie. don't have a cheery smile on your face while reporting about the deaths of American soldiers shot down in the skies over Iraq). Your introduction and conclusion should be the most upbeat parts of the broadcast.
- **Appearance.** Sit up straight (judges hate broadcasters who slouch) and hold your papers flat (or a little tilted) on the desk. Place your clock on the desk so that you can see it without turning your head away from the script.