

WRITING BROADCAST NEWS



The objective of news is (1) to accurately inform and (2) to entertain.

Listener/viewer attention spans are short; also, retention of vast amounts of spoken information is not high.

So, in broadcast news, sentences and stories are short.

Selection of information to include is crucial.



Electronic News Leads

Don't try to answer all “5 Ws” – who, what, where, when and why (also “how”) -- only one or two.



What are the most important “Ws”?

In this order: What ... Who ...
Where.

Purpose of the lead?

Interest and inform
listeners/viewers.

Lead Structure

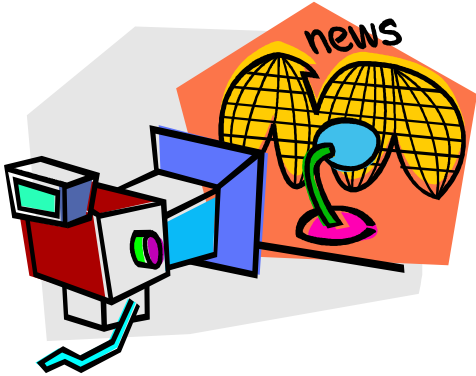
Hard-news leads – come right to the point.

“Florida will gain two seats in Congress following the 2010 census.”

Listener may miss essential details because you don't yet have his/her full attention.

Soft-news lead – designed to catch listener's ear.

“Florida will soon have more clout in Washington.”



Writing Rules for Broadcast News

Abbreviations (?)

Symbols (?)

Numbers (?)

Spell out numbers under 12, write out “thousand,” “million”

Contractions (?)

Keep sentences short – 20 words or fewer.





Writing Rules (cont.)

Ages – go before the name; use only with good reason.

Dates – use “th” and “rd” (14th, 22nd)

Fractions – spell out (two thirds); “about two thirds” is better than “66 percent.”

Names and Titles

Titles go before names (Secretary of State John Kerry)

Unfamiliar names may be omitted (“a Houston man ...”)

(Names and Titles, cont.)

Use initials of organizations if well known (“D-P-S,” “N-F-L”)

Double-space copy

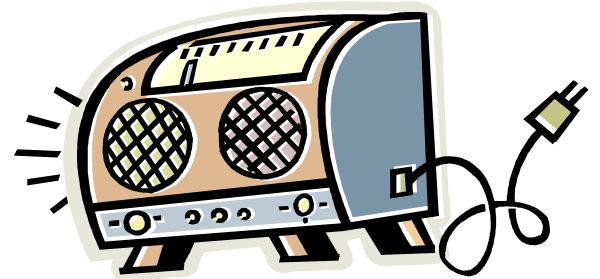
Broadcast news writing 2

News for Radio

Written for the ear, like a commercial

What are “actualities” and what do they do?

Sound bites, provide color and credibility.





Writing to Actualities

Set-up must include name and position of person speaking, what the actuality is about.

Must not “parrot” words in the actuality (?)

Should stand by itself within the story.

Sometimes, words person being interviewed speaks give you a natural set-up.

(FROM TEXAS STATE NETWORK)

#25

:17

SLUG: BEST BIZ CITIES

VOICE: JON LIEBER, ANALYST

LEAD: THE BUSINESS WEBSITE “THUMBTRACK” ... AND THE EWING MARIAN KAUFMAN FOUNDATION ... HAVE SURVEYED THOUSANDS OF BUSINESSES ACROSS THE COUNTRY ON THE BEST CITIES FOR SMALL BUSINESS ... AND FIVE OF THE TOP TEN ARE IN TEXAS. ANALYST JON LIEBER SAYS THERE ARE THREE KEY FACTORS.



[CLIP] :17 OUTCUE: “OF THE ROAD ARE”

LIEBER SAYS IT'S EASIER TO START A BUSINESS IF THERE ARE PLENTY OF PEOPLE AROUND TO BUY YOU PRODUCT OR USE YOUR SERVICE. HOUSTON WAS THIRD ... AUSTIN 4TH ... DALLAS AND FORT WORTH WERE SIXTH AND SEVENTH AND SAN ANTONIO WAS 8TH.

Radio News Writing Basics

A strength of broadcast news is immediacy (?)

Therefore, broadcast news writing stresses present tense

“President meets ...” rather than
“President today held a meeting.”

Use “says” instead of “said.”

Use active voice (rather than passive voice). “Joe hit the ball, not “The ball was hit by Joe.”





Radio News Writing basics, cont.

Length (?)

Radio stories should not be
longer than 45 seconds

Usually three or four sentences.

News for Television

Pictures tell the story as much as the words do.

[TV news package](#)

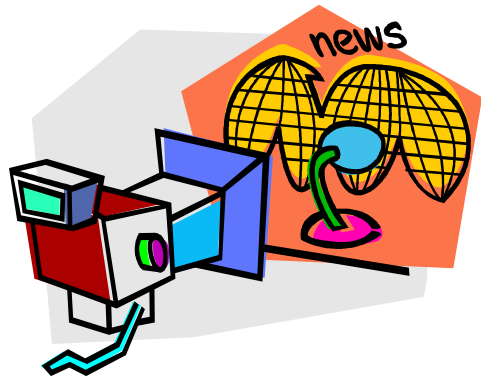
Support the video with words that “fill in the blanks.”

Television News Scripts

Two-column format ... video and audio on left ... script on right.

Terms: B-roll ... CG ... O/C ... SOT ... VO.





Types of Television Stories

Nicole Osei audition reel

Read Stories (Readers) – no VO or SOT, may use graphic.

Voice-Overs (VO) – script read over an edited video sequence.

VO/SOTs – script read over video sequence, with an SOT included.

Package – pretaped VO/SOT, with an intro for the anchor and a “lockout” at the end.

Television News Writing Basics

Let the picture tell the story – use words to clarify items that are not obvious from the video.

View video before writing the story – words must match the video. Easier to change words than video.

Identify people shown in stories quickly – don't leave viewers guessing.

Change times and locations logically – don't switch back and forth in time and location.

