

A2 LEVEL

FACT FILES

Journalism

For first teaching from September 2013

For first award in Summer 2014

Radio Packages



journalism

in the Media and Communications Industry (JMC)

Radio Packages



Course Content

Feature and script writing skills and techniques for online, print and broadcast productions

What is a radio package?

A radio package includes as many as three clips of audio, perhaps someone talking about the story, an expert or a witness and the rest of the details, voiced up by a reporter. Packages for the commercial sector are usually shorter than they would be for example, for the BBC.



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How do I do one?

Firstly, whatever you do, you need to plan a rough outline of your package. You need to know how long it is supposed to be and what points you want to make. This will help you to decide what interviews and sound effects you need to record.

Research: You need some facts about the story you are covering. You need to know who your interviewee is and why you are talking to them.



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A package for radio consists of the following:

Write the Cue: Write two lines about the story and a line introducing the report, three lines in total, with the third line introducing the reporter's name. The cue is read by the newsreader or presenter. Add sound effects and audio clips of interviewees.

For example:

Cue: The Head of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland has admitted indecent advances towards priests, dating back to the 1980s.

Cardinal Keith O'Brien who comes from Ballycastle in County Antrim had denied the allegations a week ago. Reporter Fionnuala O'Connell has the details:

Up fx – church music

It's the latest clerical abuse scandal to rock the Catholic Church. Today, the man who once led Catholics in Scotland, was asking for forgiveness from his parishioners, after revealing he did abuse priests:

Audio clip of Cardinal O'Brien

The gay community in Scotland have branded the Cardinal a hypocrite. The disgraced County Antrim born priest has consistently condemned same sex marriage. Now the gay community want an apology:

Vox gay community or spokesperson

The man, who only weeks ago had been selected to choose

the next Pope after Benedict the 16th's resignation, is now facing an inquiry by his own Church into his actions.

So – how do I start? Read on!

Beginning your package. Start your package with some sound effects to make the listener feel as if they are there or so they can picture where you are.



Tell the story: Using your voice and clips of your interviewees or wild track, tell the story. Audio clips are just 20 – 30 seconds, and less than that for commercial radio usually. Radio packages are usually around 3 minutes for the BBC and much shorter for commercial radio such as no more than a minute.

Being descriptive is essential if you are the reporter on the scene and making a radio package. Describe what you see and hear.

Here's an example of a **good piece** and a **bad piece**:

Bad Example: "The shooting took place at a house in the County Antrim town of Ballymena around 8am."

Good example: "The quietness of a rural county Antrim town was shattered at breakfast time when gunmen opened fire on the bungalow behind me."

Every second counts in radio

In radio you have three sentences to tell a story. Long cues, bore listeners so write sentences with one idea in each.



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Scene setting is a very effective way to describe the scene of a shooting to listeners.

Look at the **possible introductions for a radio news broadcast** below. This piece could be done live, using a telephone or could be pre-recorded and sent to the studio in advance – called 'as live.'

"Fionnuala O'Connell is at the scene now..."

"Fionnuala O'Connell's got more..."

"Our reporter, Fionnuala O'Connell, was first on the scene this morning..."

"Fionnuala O'Connell's got the latest..."

"Fionnuala O'Connell's been speaking to local residents/ police chiefs/ ambulance staff, fire crews etc..."

Then Fionnuala will begin a conversation with the news reader/ presenter something like this:

"Thanks Nicola (the news reader/ presenter). I'm at Cloverfields, a residential area on the outskirts of the town of Portglenone in County Antrim. It's just a stone's throw away from the scene of last night's horrific murder. That's how police have described the killing, though no details of how it happened have been released. Local people report hearing a disturbance last night outside the house, part of which has been covered with huge police screens.

VOX – 10-15 secs of shocked local residents

Forensic experts will continue their fingertip search of the garden for clues and it's unlikely the body will be removed any time soon."



Here's a **bad example** of setting the scene of a story for radio, followed by a **good example**.

"A youth's been shot dead as he worked at a mechanical digger being used to clear gullies on the Newtownards Road, shortly before 8 o'clock this morning. It's understood

the attack happened outside a cement factory as workers were beginning their day shift, including a relative of the victim.

Fionnuala O'Connell reports..."

Here's a **good example** of the same story:

"A 16 year old boy's been shot dead in Belfast. It happened at a cement factory on the Newtownards Road in the east of the city. Reporter, Fionnuala O'Connell is at the scene now..."



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The Top Story – Starting the bulletin

Another way of beginning a radio package is with the reporter, live at the scene or in a pre-recorded piece:

Here's an example:

Introduction

"It's one o'clock... You're listening to Downtown Radio and Cool FM. I'm Fionnuala O'Connell and I'm at the scene of an horrific murder in East Belfast."

or

"I'm Fionnuala O'Connell. ...at the scene of an horrific murder in East Belfast. The discovery of a dismembered body in a wheelie bin has sent shockwaves through this community.

Vox of shocked residents

Forensics are still looking for clues, at the murder scene, in an attempt to establish what happened and why."

Another way of introducing our stories in a radio package or a news bulletin is as follows:

One line into the story, followed by an audio clip. Then a further couple of lines into a different clip of audio of the same speaker telling the story and naming them

For example:

'Companies are being urged to tackle bullying at work':

Audio: short clip of researcher from Queen's University "Experts say bullying's become a major cause of stress for workers, leading to the loss of millions of working days. Lynn Witheridge, of Queen's University, helped carry out the study... audio clip of Lynn.

Tense and writing a radio package for the news bulletin

Where possible, write your scripts in the present tense because they will sound more immediate.

Reporting Figures and Numbers in radio packages and bulletins:

Radio news bulletins are not the platform for detailed figures and numbers. Newspapers and online can do that better. If you have to use figures, then round the numbers off.



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Here's a **bad example**:

"Daewoo plans to invest 49.58 million pounds in Northern Ireland."

Here's a **good example**:

Daewoo plans to invest almost 50 million pounds in Northern Ireland."

Remember, the listener driving home from work can't see the words you're reading – you can. The message is to use simple, uncomplicated sentences.

Using quality audio in a radio package or news bulletin

Quality audio means an interview done in person – as opposed to doing an interview on the phone (not quality) but still often used in journalism, especially if a story is just breaking.

All audio recorded should be capable of being understood on the first hearing. If the listener has to spend two or three seconds trying to second guess what the interviewee has said then it has failed!

Your first line into any audio must complement the script. Do not ever say in the introductory line what's said in the audio clip!

For example:

Fionnuala O'Connell says **she's glad to be alive** is a poor introduction if the first line of the audio clip says: "**I'm glad to be alive.**"

Listen back: mix *interview clips and sound effects*, in any combination you think works, into a package that *makes sense, is fair and accurate* and is *interesting* to listen to.

Sound effects (FX), Music or Wild track:

Wild track is the sounds you record when you're on location to do an interview. For example, if you're at a jobs announcement for an electronics company, make sure to record some machinery sounds.

You can use the wild track to **bring your package to life**. The wild track is *faded in and out under the different elements to make it sound smoother*.

Finally, **listen to it and ask yourself do you like it?** Then ask a friend or a colleague the same.



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Activities

Suggested Revision questions

What elements make up a great radio package?
Describe the features of a good news bulletin.

Suggested reading

McNae's Essential Law for Journalists

Useful websites

<http://www.learnnewsdesk.co.uk/FactFiles/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism>

1. Firstly, whatever you do, you need to plan a rough outline of your report. You need to know how long it is supposed to be and what points you want to make. This will help you to decide what interviews and sound effects you need to record.

Consider the following areas in your planning:

2. Research: You need some facts about the story you are covering. You need to know who your interviewee is and why you are talking to them.
3. Sounds: Sound effects are very important on radio because, unlike TV, you don't have pictures to help

you. Even before you go to your location **THINK** about what kind of sounds you might hear that would make your package sound interesting. When you get there **LISTEN** carefully, then record the sounds. For example, in a school these might include the school bell, pupils in the playground, classroom noises, keyboards, pupils changing classes, sports classes, football, etc.

4. Wild track: Wherever you are recording make sure you record the sounds around you without anybody (including yourself) speaking. This will help you when you put all the elements of your package together.
5. Interviews: Make sure you listen to the answers to your questions carefully and if you're not satisfied with any answer, make sure you follow it up with extra questions. Record all interviewees' names and how to pronounce them.

Step 1: Write your "cue" - the introduction spoken by your presenter - first. Cues act as a 'headline' to your piece and are vital to grabbing the attention and interest of the listener.

You can find out all you need to know about writing good radio cues in this **BBC College of Journalism guide to radio cues**.

Step 2: Beginning your package. It's often effective to start your package with some sound effects to make the listener feel as if they are there or so they can picture where you are.

Step 3: Developing the story. You could bring in either:

- your voice from the studio
- your voice from location
- one of your interviewees - probably just 20 or 30 seconds of the interview (you have to choose the best bit).

Step 4: You then continue mixing these elements, in any combination you think works, into a package that makes sense, is fair and accurate and is interesting to listen to.

Tip: You can use the wild track to make the connections between these elements sound smoother. If you go from something you record in the playground to an interview in a classroom, the sudden "jump" in background noise will be distracting and annoying to the listener.

The wild track is faded in and out under the different elements to make it sound smoother.

It isn't easy, but after a bit of practice you can make a really good report that tells a story in an interesting way - and which makes people want to listen to the end.

