

A2 LEVEL

FACT FILES

Journalism

For first teaching from September 2013

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Radio Wraps



journalism

in the Media and Communications Industry (JMC)

Radio Wraps



Course Content

Language, Forms and Conventions in Online, Print and Broadcast Journalism

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What is a radio wrap?



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A radio wrap is a very simple package, in that it includes a script, written and recorded by a reporter and will feature a clip of audio, taken from an interview with someone else. The clip is fitted into the middle of the script, so in effect, the reporter 'wraps' their voice around the audio clip.

A wrap can also include some sound effects but there may not be time for this.

The reporter also needs to write a separate 'cue', or introduction to the story. This will be read by the newsreader.

How long is a wrap?

This depends on your story and your audience. A BBC World Service wrap, about a complicated story on international

politics, may be as long as 45 to 50 seconds. A wrap for BBC Radio Ulster may be 35 seconds. A wrap for the commercial sector or BBC Radio 1 is usually shorter.

How do I do one?

Plan: Firstly, you need to plan a rough outline of your wrap. You need to know how long it is supposed to be and what points you want to make. This will help you to decide who you need to interview to gain information, or to record an interview and take a clip. You might also need to find sound effects.



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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.

Write the Cue: Decide what is the most important or interesting point of the story. Now you need to sum that up in two or three lines. The third line should introduce the reporter.

The cue is read by the newsreader or presenter.



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For example:

CUE: *A policeman is recovering in hospital after a shotgun was fired at officers in the North Queen Street area of Belfast last night. In total, twenty-seven officers were injured in the trouble, which also flared again at the Broadway roundabout. Julia Paul reports.*

Find your interviewee: Now you know the 'top line' of your report, you can decide who you want to interview to illustrate the story. In the example above, the report is bringing together information about rioting at a number of different locations in Belfast. But the fact that connects all of the events is the number of police officers injured. So the interviewee is a senior police officer.

Record an interview: Recording an interview to find a 'clip' of audio can be easier than doing a longer interview where you need to record your questions too. But if you are looking for a particular answer, it may be more difficult! You need to think carefully about the focus of your questions. What exactly is it you are looking for the interviewee to comment on or answer? Remember you can tell them the areas you want to cover, but don't give them the questions – you don't want them giving you a 'statement', you want answers!



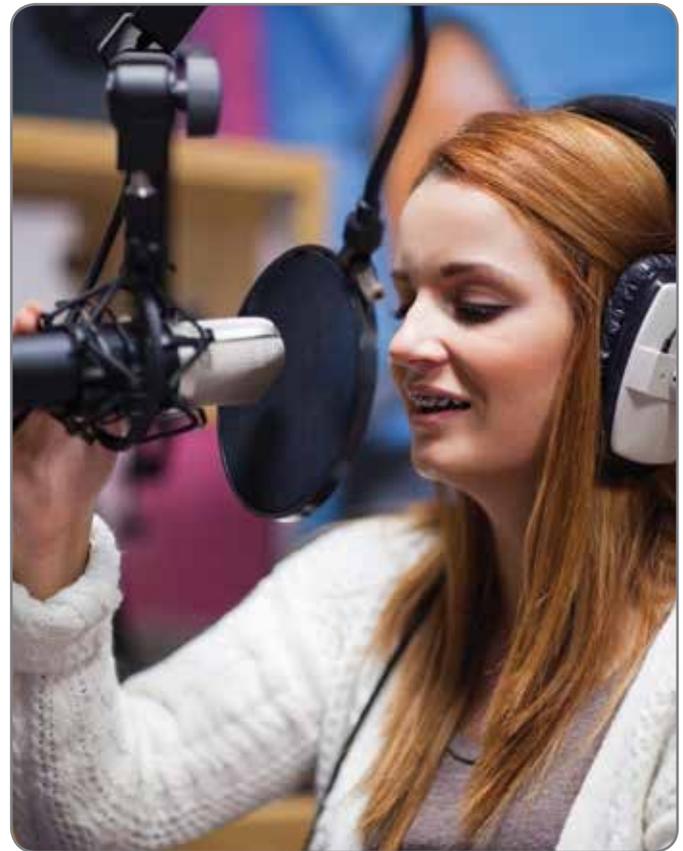
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Aim for 'quality' audio in a wrap: 'Quality' audio means an interview done in person – in the studio or using a recording device – as opposed to on the phone (not quality). It's always better to have an interview in quality but sometimes phone quality has to be used (as in our example), especially if a story is just breaking.

However, 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 work out what the interviewee has said then it has failed!

If you can do the interview at a location relevant to the story, even better. You could interview a school teacher in a classroom, a railway company director on a station platform – but make sure the background noise isn't too distracting.

Take a clip: Listen back to the interview you have done – which answer interests you the most? Unless you are looking for a very specific answer, this is generally the best way of choosing a clip. And don't forget, you are writing the script that will wrap around the clip, so you can adjust it if you get an answer you didn't expect.



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Clips are generally just 20 – 30 seconds, and less than that for commercial radio usually, so you may need to take an extract from one of your interviewee's answers.

In the example we have, we interviewed Chief Superintendent Mark Hamilton from the PSNI about the police officers injured. This was the clip we chose:

CLIP: *He's also trying to come to terms with the fact that someone tried to murder him last night. And so, as well as having shotgun injuries to his arm, he is dealing with the shock of a realisation this morning that someone tried to take his life and that of his colleagues last night, while he was out trying to defend the community.*

In this clip, the Chief Supt is clearly angry and upset about what has happened to his officers. This helps engage the listener and explain the story to the audience.

Write a script: The last piece of the jigsaw is to write a script around your clip. You need to include the rest of the information which is relevant to your report. Remember the five 'W's – who, what, where, when, why - and sometimes how.



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But you need to make sure your script is not too long. Broadcasters generally estimate the length of a script by counting three words for every second. Every second counts in radio, so make sure the important information is at the top of the script, and anything that could be cut out if it needs to be shortened, at the end.

You also need to remember that listeners only have one chance to listen to a report on the radio. It is easier for them if you write short, clear sentences, and spell out any acronyms.

For example

SCRIPT: *This morning the clean-up was underway across Belfast. In the North Queen Street area, fourteen police officers were injured, three when they were hit with pellets when a shotgun was fired at the crowd during disturbances.*

IN LINE: Chief Superintendent Mark Hamilton says one officer is still in hospital with pellet injuries.

CLIP: He's also trying to come to terms with the fact that someone tried to murder him last night. And so, as well as having shotgun injuries to his arm, he is dealing with the shock of a realisation this morning that someone tried to take his life and that of his colleagues last night, while he was out trying to defend the community.

SCRIPT CONTINUED: *There was also rioting for another night at the Broadway roundabout. A crowd of around two hundred Nationalists began attacking police with bottles, stones and petrol bombs. The police responded with water cannon and plastic bullets. A total of thirteen officers were injured. And in Coolfin Street near the City Hospital, seven people were injured when a car was driven through the crowd.*

An important part of the script is the section that leads 'into your clip'. You need to write a sentence that introduces your interviewee, and what they are about to say. This is called the 'in-line'. It's very important that you don't repeat what the interviewee says in the clip.

So, for example, the in-line from our example is this:

IN-LINE: *Chief Superintendent Mark Hamilton says one officer is still on hospital with pellet injuries.*

If we had written - *Chief Superintendent Mark Hamilton says one officer is trying to come to terms with the fact that someone tried to murder him last night* - that would have sounded silly, as those are the words at the start of the audio clip.

Record your script: ALWAYS read your script OUT LOUD before you start recording. That way you can check for missed words or confusing sentences. You can also make sure that your in-line works with your clip.

But you also need to practice, as your aim is to use your voice to 'tell' the story, rather than just reading it.

Edit your wrap: Finally you need to put your recorded script and your clip together and edit out any breaths or gaps. Now you have a wrap file to give to the news reader along with the cue!