

Broadcast News & Public Affairs

Course Study

The Professional Broadcast Handbook, U.C. Berkeley Communications Department.
College of San Mateo Broadcast & Media Department, Radio World Magazine,
Broadcast Magazine, N.F.C.B., American Press Association, NPR Training Channel.

Breathing Exercises

The following exercise may make you feel tired at first, do keep at it as you will begin to notice that it takes less effort to breath, less energy is used when breathing plus it helps you learn to co-ordinate the diaphragm and abdominal muscles when breathing.

To find out if you are breathing correctly, place a hand on your belly button. This area should expand first when you breathe in and then spread upwards until your chest is expanded (don't lift the shoulders or push the stomach out). If you feel you are not breathing properly, practice the following exercise.

Lay flat on your back.

Place your hands on your waist, fingers pointing towards your belly button.

Focus on filling up your stomach from the bottom to the top taking a slow deep breath. (The aim is not to fill yourself to bursting but to inhale enough air so that you can feel the difference between a shallow breath taken when breathing from the chest).

You should feel your stomach rise and your hands being raised gently up and outward until you feel your chest expanding. The expansion is not only at the front of the body but also to the sides and back as well.

Breath out slowly to a count of 5

Repeat the exercise 10 times

Practice daily before you rise in the morning and prior to sleeping at night for 5 - 10 minutes gradually increasing this to 3 or 4 times a day.

Once you get it right, practice as often as possible, sitting, standing and whilst at work until you are breathing naturally from your abdomen.

Try the following exercise to help increase breath control - Count on one breath singing each number out loud. using one breath at any comfortable pitch. Start with a small number like 5 or 10 and increase this gradually until you can manage 25 or without straining, tensing or running out of breath.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine a kite flying high in the air. When the airflow is consistent, the kite will fly smoothly and steadily on top of the air current. When the airflow is inconsistent the kite will bob and dive with no rhyme or reason. Your singing tone is much like that kite. If you provide a strong steady airflow, your vocal tone will have the opportunity to ride strongly and smoothly to our ears. But if your airflow is uncontrolled and inconsistent your voice will break and waiver.

The purpose of this narration is to teach you to breathe properly. The purpose of the breathing exercise below is to increase your breathing capacity and control.

Before beginning this breathing exercise variation, please note that bringing more oxygen into your body than accustomed can sometimes result in lightheadedness or dizziness. Please take care to stand close to something that offers support should you need to steady yourself. Conferring with a physician is recommended before beginning any exercise routine.

BREATHING 101

To breathe properly for singing, you must breathe low into the bottom portion of the lungs, engaging the diaphragm. Your rib cage and back will expand. Your shoulders and upper chest will remain still and will not rise.

Try it yourself: Inhale deeply and exhale completely. Again inhale and exhale.

Now try it again, only this time inhale for four counts, hold your breath for four counts, exhale over four counts and then wait four counts before inhaling again. Let's do three complete sets of that counting exercise. Remember to inhale deeply and properly for singing.

Inhale 2 3 4, Hold 2 3 4 Exhale 2 3 4 and Wait 2 3 Again.
Inhale 2 3 4, Hold 2 3 4 Exhale 2 3 4 and Wait 2 3 Last Time.
Inhale 2 3 4, Hold 2 3 4 Exhale 2 3 4 and Wait 2 3 4.

This basic exercise is an easy one you can do every day. Plain fact, the more you exercise your breathing, the more control you will have over your voice. With a little time and practice you will be a master of breathing control. As you make progress, challenge yourself to increase the breathing count to 8, 12, 16 and more. For best results mix and match the numbers. The size of singing phrase is never the same, so practicing all different airflow situations is ideal. Breathing correctly needs to be a habit, meaning you need to do it correctly without thinking about it. So in the beginning you really want to concentrate on the proper technique.

Module 2: Skills for Radio Journalists

What to Say: Finding the Angle

The first step in developing a news story is to find the angle, or the main point of the story. One way to find the angle is to clarify the facts and then ask the question, "So what?"

To answer the "so what?" question, you need to understand who the listeners are. What news interests them? What information is relevant to their daily lives? What are they worried about? What do they feel strongly about?

The answer to "so what?" will lead to the story angle.

The necessity of an angle

The angle is what makes listeners say, "Oh, that's important," or "That's interesting."

Identifying the angle helps to sharpen focus for the story and leads to clearer writing. A story without an angle that covers every aspect of an issue will be confusing and lose listeners.

Finding the angle

While researching a story, ask:

- What is happening or what has been happening?
- Why is the story important?
- Why will listeners care about this story?
- What will listeners want to know?

Think about:

- Listeners

Who are they?

What will make them identify with the story and find it relevant and interesting?

What do they already know or think about the issue?

What other questions would they like to have answered?

The story from all its perspectives

Why did the event occur?

What do people think about the event that occurred?

Who is involved in the event and why?

Will something happen in the future as a result of the news event?

What to Say: Writing for Listeners

Writing for radio is different than writing for print media. Keep these differences in mind:

Reading	Listening
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Readers usually focus only on what they are reading. They are usually not doing something else at the same time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listeners are usually doing something else while listening to the radio, so their focus may be divided unless they are interested.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Readers can go back to what was written before and re-read it to make sense or to clarify.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listeners hear words and sounds once and then they are gone. They only have one opportunity to understand and make sense of a story.

Writing for the Ear

Writing for radio means writing the way people speak. Keep the following tips in mind:

- **Break** the rules of grammar when necessary. Clarity is the goal.
- **Say aloud** what you've written to make sure it makes sense.
- **Imagine** that someone is listening while you are writing and pretend you are talking to that listener.
- **Keep it simple** by using just one idea per sentence and avoiding long words.

What to Say: Tips for Scripting

Like other kinds of writing, scripting involves several steps:

- Researching
- Creating a structure
- Writing

Research

Research is the foundation of any story. Consider these sources:

- News events related to the topic
- Stories previously written or aired about the topic
- People who can talk about the topic (interviews)
- Organizations involved in the story

Use a combination of research methods. Start with these basic research tools:

- **The Internet.** Use search engines to research a topic, find organizations or resources related to stories and locate archives of earlier stories. Some of the most popular search engines are [AlltheWeb](#), [Google](#) and [Yahoo](#).
- **Publications.** Newspapers, magazines and books can provide ideas and resources for stories.
- **Contacts.** Talk with colleagues and friends to find out what they think about a topic. They may be able to suggest people to interview.

Techniques

- Research
- Story structure
- Content
- Tone
- Creativity

Script Structure

The structure of a script depends on its purpose. Is it a news report? Is the purpose to entertain? To persuade? Or to share something important?

Be clear about how the script will flow. What pieces of information will be included? In what order? While a news story requires a more formal style and approach, these tips can be useful for scripting:

- Imagine talking to a friend. What questions does the friend ask? Answering these questions one-by-one will help you write with the listener in mind.
- Draft a rough outline based on the "talking to a friend" exercise above. Decide whether to tell it chronologically, with the most important facts first or some other way.
- Start with an arresting sentence--called a "hook"--at the beginning to attract and hold the listener's interest.
- End the story by satisfying listeners that all important questions have been answered.

Content

Use the following tips to write for the ear. Remember that these general tips will need to be adapted accordingly when writing news stories.

- [Write in short phrases](#). Keep it short, punchy and direct. Use only one idea per sentence.
- [Round off complicated numbers and write them in words](#).
- [Try to humanize statistics, facts and figures](#).
- [Use verbal signposts](#) such as "and," "but" and "so" to show structure in longer chunks of talk and to help listeners know where they are.
- [Paint pictures with words](#). Remember, listeners have to use imagination to visualize what is happening.
- [Write as if talking to only one person](#) and create a connection with listeners by using personal words like "you" or "we."
- Use contractions like "can't," "won't" and "we'll." They will make the story sound more natural.

[Here's an exercise](#) to help you think about writing for radio.

Tone

Getting the content right is not enough. The tone, or voice, is equally important. Listeners should not be insulted or embarrassed by an inappropriate tone.

The tone for news writing should be:

- Unemotional.
- Direct and dynamic, but not sensational.

In other kinds of radio programs, such as talk shows or magazine programs:

- Be warm, friendly and enthusiastic.
- Treat listeners with respect. Don't patronize them.
- Talk to listeners but don't lecture them.

Creativity

All good writing springs from creativity, including news reporting even though it is more formal in style than other programs.

Creativity involves:

- Selecting specific details that paint pictures and allow the listener to imagine what is being described.
- Avoiding generalizations and adjectives such as beautiful, nice and lovely.

Describe the scene in detail and let the listener decide whether it is truly beautiful.

What to Say: What Not to Say

Part of being a good radio host or presenter is knowing what not to say. If listeners are insulted or embarrassed, they won't want to listen any more. Being a good radio host requires cultural sensitivity and accurate knowledge about an audience, from what style of program listeners prefer to what topics interest them. Experienced radio professionals know what offends listeners.

Radio hosts should not:

- **Make listeners feel like just part of a crowd.**
- Use sexist or patronizing language.
- Talk unprofessionally or make amateurish requests.
- Send private messages to friends.
- Alert listeners to commercials so that they will want to turn off the radio.

These examples of actual phrases heard on the radio illustrate how listeners might respond.

What was said:	Possible listener reaction:	Why this shouldn't be said:
Hello to all of you out there in listener land!	Well, I don't live in "listener land!" And I'm NOT "all of you!"	Makes listeners feel like part of a crowd
And thanks to our lovely newsreader, Angela. She's looking drop-dead gorgeous today!	Angela's a professional. Isn't that what you're supposed to be? Such comments are sexist and patronizing.	Sexist
Whoops! Finger trouble again -- we've just got a new computer in the studio--so do bear with me!	Why should I? I expect YOU to do your job. I've got problems of my own!	Unprofessional and amateurish
Well, I seem to have run out of time again. Join me again tomorrow.	WHY have you run out of time? Shouldn't you be watching the clock?	Amateurish
And here's a special song for my boyfriend, Siphon. He'll know why it's special.	Why should I be excluded just because you want to send a private message to what's-his-name?	Private message
Well, let's go off to the marketplace for a few messages from our sponsors.	Oh, commercials. I'll go and make a cup of coffee. Maybe I'll just switch off.	Commercial alert

Review: Writing for Radio

How to Say It: Talking to One Listener

A good script is the beginning of a good radio show. Presentation--the sound or tone of the presenter--is next. Whether reading a script or speaking spontaneously, on radio how you say something is just as important as what you say.

Effective presentation depends on:

- Understanding the audience
- Understanding your own voice and body

Audience: One Listener

In the section on writing scripts, you read about the idea of talking to only one listener. This principle is also the basis of all radio presentation, even news reporting. This practice will help you create intimacy and listeners will be drawn into the program.

Because people listen to the radio almost everywhere (in their bedrooms, in their cars, while they are working) radio provides the opportunity to be close to the audience in a way that other media do not.

Respecting listeners - talking to them as equals, friends and colleague - is an important aspect to this relationship. Listeners should not feel preached to or patronized. By visualizing this closeness with listeners, the right tone will come naturally.

Choice of tone is also influenced by:

- **Type of program.** The tone of a youth show announcer is different from that of a news reader. The presenter of a gender talk show will have a different tone than the host of a music program.
- **Time of day.** Early morning programs require a lively, high-energy tone to get listeners going. News programs require announcers to use a formal tone. Talk show hosts try to come across as friendly and more casual.

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How to Say It: Body and Voice

In addition to imagining one listener when talking, three other factors are key to effective radio presentation:

- Tension and stress
- Body positioning and gesturing
- Voice and speech

Tension and Stress

If a radio presenter is stressed, listeners will hear it in her voice, they won't focus on what she is actually saying. Tension ties the body's muscles in knots and can cause the voice to sound thin, strained, irritated or bored.

Before going on the air it is important to release the tension that stress, anxiety or other emotions can cause. Relaxation exercises, such as the ones listed to the right, can relieve stress by releasing tension from the body and calming emotions. Releasing tension opens the diaphragm, which promotes deeper breathing. This, in turn, helps the voice to sound more open and confident.

During times of political turmoil or conflict, it is even more important for radio presenters and reporters to manage their personal tension.

Feeling anxious, angry, sad or depressed can make it difficult to sound sane, comforting or calm. But that is what radio presenters need to do for the sake of their listeners. Here's an example of how this all comes together in a tense reporting situation. Read how to [keep your cool](#).

Posture, Gesturing and Facial Expressions

Posture

Tension, as noted above, can cause the body to tie itself up in knots. Good body positioning, or posture, promotes confidence and allows for both a physical and psychological opening-up. Keep these tips in mind:

- Sit in a position that allows easy breathing and body movement.

- Never sit in a hunched or doubled-over position. Bad posture makes breathing more difficult and leads to a voice that sounds tense and uncomfortable.
- Good posture also involves
 - Allowing the back to open and lengthen
 - Allowing the neck and shoulders to be free
 - Sensing the support of the floor or chair

Gesturing

Gesturing is a natural part of conversation. A presenter who gestures naturally as she talks will communicate more clearly. Listeners will notice the difference even if they can't see the gestures.

Facial Expression

Facial expressions are critical to the sound of a voice. If this seems hard to believe, imagine talking to someone on a telephone. Often, a person's voice indicates whether she is frowning or smiling. Listen to the radio and decide by tone if the announcer is smiling or has a serious expression.

On radio a smile is the equivalent of making eye contact. A smile, even if no one sees it, makes a person sound more inviting, confident and fresh.

Of course, a smile is not always appropriate. For example, news reports on serious subjects are seldom delivered with a smile, unless a lighter story is included at the end.

Also, think about the fact that there are many different kinds of smiles. In addition to smiles of happiness, there are smiles that indicate understanding, sympathy or comfort. Think about how and when a smile during the following programs might be used.

- Talk shows
- Shows that give advice or support to the community
- Human interest stories or interviews
- Music request shows

Practice what it feels like to read a script while smiling. Then read a news script with a more serious expression. Listen for the difference. Try listening to the radio to "hear" the expression on the presenter's face.

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Voice

The best voice for radio is natural and relaxed. The more comfortable you are with yourself and your voice, the clearer your voice will be. [Voice exercises](#) can help build confidence and promote speaking clearly.

Listen to someone who mumbles or someone who lowers the volume of her voice at the end of her sentences and notice how hard it is to understand what she is saying. Since listeners can't interrupt the radio to ask what was said, radio presenters must take extra care to be clear. Here are some tips:

- Before you go on air, do some exercises (included in the link above) to free up your jaw and tongue.
- If you are planning to read from a script, practice aloud until you feel confident. Pay special attention to difficult words and foreign names.
- Practice your pace and rhythm. Are you speaking too fast or too slow? Remember to pause and breathe naturally. Ask someone to give you feedback.

How to Say It: Presentation Tips

Before going on the air:

- **Avoid stressful situations.**
 - Get plenty of rest to feel free and alert.
 - Allow plenty of time to prepare.
 - Check for necessary items, such as script, reading glasses, water, etc.
 - Wear loose, comfortable clothing.
 - Use the relaxation exercises from the previous page.
- **Prepare the voice.**
 - Avoid fizzy drinks and milky liquids. They can cause a film on the throat, which causes throat clearing.
 - Don't eat sweets or chocolate. Sugar thickens saliva.
 - Allow time for voice warm-ups and breathing exercises, like those reviewed on the previous page.
- **Prepare your body and posture.**
 - Take a minute to relax your neck and shoulders. Do deep breathing to focus your mind and body. Breathe from the diaphragm.
 - Check your posture and make sure the microphone is in a good position.
 - Focus your thoughts and regulate your breathing.
 - Remember to gesture.
 - Finally, remind yourself that you are ready. Try saying to yourself:

I'm going to talk to one listener, just beyond the microphone.

- I'm exactly where I want to be.
- I'm well-prepared.

On the air:

- **Equipment and materials**
 - Wear headphones over one ear so you can monitor how you sound and still be alert to what is happening in the studio.
 - Always have pen and paper ready.
- **On-air discipline**
 - Be prepared with cues. A cue is the introduction that a studio presenter gives to a pre-recorded story or a live interview. A good cue will lead the listener naturally into whatever follows.
 - Avoid giving long lists of what's coming up. Nobody will remember and lists are boring anyway.
 - Before announcing the time, make sure it's correct.
 - Give frequent station IDs and throw aheads.
- **Professional discipline**
 - Don't take personal phone calls.
 - Listeners are the first priority, even when visitors are in the studio.
- **Scripts**
 - Use these guidelines for reading scripts:
 - **Prepare.** Unless there's a real emergency, never read anything on air that hasn't been practiced aloud. Tongue-twisters are not always apparent until they are spoken aloud.
 - **Understand.** Never read anything that could be confusing to your listener. Your voice will reflect it. Take the time to re-write the script before reading.
 - **Mark the script.** Underline key words, mark pauses (with "/" or another symbol), write phonetic pronunciations for foreign words.
 - **Choose the appropriate tone of voice.** How much emotion/feeling should be conveyed? Should the tone be light-hearted or serious?
 - **Look ahead.** Don't look at the script word by word. Train yourself to take in whole blocks of words.
 - **Handle mistakes professionally.** If you make a mistake, don't panic. If it's a big error--one that could cause confusion or misunderstanding-- apologize and correct it. Otherwise, take a breath and carry on. Don't draw attention to stumbles.

Radio Interviews: Types of Interviews

It can take a lifetime to become a good radio interviewer. Every interview is different, with its own special challenges. In a program, an interview can run for several minutes or it might end up as a brief, edited comment.

It's also helpful to keep in mind that people being interviewed might have different motivations for speaking to you. Sometimes people have a duty to speak because they are public officials. In other cases the interviewee does not have any obligation to talk, but chooses to do so because she has been persuaded that her experience is worth sharing.

This section explains two kinds of interviews: opening up and pinning down. Remember that the differences are not always clear-cut and that interviews may have elements of both.

Opening up interviews

An opening up interview encourages a person to share a story or experience. It is usually conducted in a relaxed and friendly way.

Opening up interviews include:

1. **Human interest interviews**
 - Examples
 - A chat with the leader of a youth choir who's just taken the group to perform at the International Choir Festival in Tokyo. How was the experience?
 - An interview with a former drug dealer who now runs a youth center for teenagers who have been involved in street gangs. What led to the change in his life?
2. **Personal profiles**
 - Examples
 - An interview with the first woman to be put in charge of the South African Prison Service. What kind of person is she?
 - An interview with a former Olympic swimmer who is now running for parliament. What prompted her interest in politics?
3. **Highly sensitive interviews**
 - Examples
 - An interview with a survivor of child abuse who now wants to tell her story for the sake of others who may be in the same position.
 - An interview with a Burmese woman who was abducted from her village and forced to become a sex worker in Thailand.

Pinning down interviews

A pinning down interview is used to get answers to questions in the news. Radio reporters use this type of interview when they need to ask tough questions of people who are accountable to listeners, for example, an elected official or a company spokesperson. Asking revealing or hard-hitting questions without sounding aggressive can be a challenge. Use these tips:

- Do not raise the tone of your voice
- Do not speak louder than the person you are interviewing
- If you need to interrupt, and you often do, wait until the person you are interviewing takes a breath and then slide in with your question.
- Make sure you have your facts straight!

Examples of pinning down interviews can include:

- Talking with the minister of health about a series of tainted vaccinations. What can she tell listeners about the vaccinations?
- Interviewing a company spokesperson about the sudden recall of a popular children's toy. What is he able to say about the safety of the product?
- Speaking with a company president about the embezzlement charges he is facing. What is his side of the story?

Radio Interviews: Preparing to Do an Interview

Conducting an interview is a fascinating, complex and uncertain art. The interviewer never knows what might happen.

Preparation is key under such uncertain circumstances. Consider these important questions when preparing to do an interview.

	Questions to think about
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who will be interviewed?• Who will be the interviewer?
Why	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why is this person being interviewed?• Does this person have a story to tell?• Is the interview part of a bigger story or report?

	Or is the interview the story?
What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the subject or focus of the interview? • What questions will be asked? • What needs to be done to convince the interview subject to participate? • What permission, if any, will be needed? • What, if any, ethical issues might the interview raise? How will you deal with them?
Where	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will this interview be conducted on the street or in a studio or someplace else (e.g., a public cafe or private home)? • Is the situation likely to be dangerous? • Will there be an audience?
When	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When will the interview be conducted? Morning, afternoon, night? • When will the interview be aired? Morning, afternoon, night? • Will it be before, during or after an emotional or disturbing event, a happy, exciting event or neither?
How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it be live or will it be taped and edited later? • How will the interview subject be prepared for the interview? • How much will the interview subject know about the focus of the interview beforehand? • Will callers be allowed to ask questions?

Radio Interviews: Tips for Interviews

Use this checklist to thoroughly prepare for an interview.

The Interviewer

An interviewer:

- Is a great listener
- Knows when, and how, to ask follow-up questions
- Has good communications skills
- Has the ability to be flexible in the interview
- Understands that there is an order in which interview questions should be asked
- Knows how and when to ask "why?"

It's important to consider gender with respect to interviewing. For example, a woman who has survived rape may not feel comfortable being interviewed by a male journalist. On the other hand, women journalists have sometimes encountered difficulties when interviewing men, especially when the man is powerful. Sometimes this can take the form of sexual harassment. Like any kind of intimidation, sexual harassment must be taken seriously. It's not just a "women's issue" and should be openly discussed in newsrooms so support systems can be put in place.

What should you do if you encounter sexual harassment in the course of your work?

- Trust your instinct. If you are uncomfortable about a suggested venue or time for the interview, make an alternative arrangement. If this is not possible, take a colleague. At the very least make sure your news editor knows where you are going and what time you expect to be back. Take your mobile phone. Remember: no interview is worth putting yourself at risk. If it doesn't feel right, don't go at all.
- If the interviewee is making you uncomfortable with remarks or actions, make it clear that your station takes sexual harassment of its employees very seriously. If the interviewee does not heed this warning, leave. Make a note of what happened and inform your boss immediately so you can discuss what action to take.

The Interview Subject

Deciding whom to interview also takes some consideration. When selecting interview subjects, these tips can help:

- **Make sure the interview subject is confident and articulate.** This is especially important if you are looking for more than a short clip or comment.
- **Be gender-aware.** Don't stereotype people according to their sex. Not all nurses are women and not all soldiers are men. Also, if a woman's husband or father does not "give permission" for her to be interviewed, how will you deal with this? Will you just give up or take time to discuss possible solutions with her?
- **Think beyond the obvious.** A person doesn't need to have a university degree to be an expert. For example, a market seller may give you a more interesting view on the economy than a university professor.
- **Keep an eye and ear out for people who have a story to tell and an interesting way of telling it.**

It is important to find out as much as possible about an interview subject.

- What are her credentials?
- Why is she the right person to interview?
- What is her background?
- What will she bring to the interview?
- Will she be lively?
- Will she offer a unique perspective?

Interviewing someone soon after she has experienced a traumatic or emotional event requires special skills. Here are some [suggestions](#) for these kinds of interviews.

Asking for the Interview

Use these tips to prepare before picking up the telephone to request an interview:

- **First, decide:**
 - **Why** you want to interview the person.
 - **When** you want to do the interview (time and date).
 - **How** to get in touch with the person (have a list of possible contacts).
- **Before calling:**
 - Rehearse the call. To keep from being nervous or forgetting something, write rough notes on what you want to say.

- Be ready to suggest calling back later if the person isn't available now.
- **During the call:**
 - If it feels appropriate, smile to sound more assertive, confident and friendly.
 - Remember that this call is the only chance to get the person to say yes.
 - Be prepared to explain why the interview is important to listeners or to the story.
 - Be ready to counter comments like: "I'll need a list of your questions first." (See the information below for what to do when someone asks for questions in advance.)
- **Remember to:**
 - Be polite, positive, friendly and clear.

Once the person has agreed to the interview, she may want to see the questions up front. It is important to find out why she wants to see the questions and try to resolve those reasons without giving her the questions. Perhaps you can explain that you don't provide questions in advance but that you can go over the areas you plan to cover.

Providing a list of questions beforehand can create issues with:

- **Follow up.** If you agree only to ask approved questions, you will probably have difficulty asking any follow-up questions. If this happens, you won't be doing your job as an interviewer.
- **Balance.** The interview will be unbalanced if you are not able to follow up.
- **Sounding rehearsed.** If the interview subject knows exactly what you are going to ask, the interview will probably sound boring or rehearsed.

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Use these [preparation tips](#) just before the interview.

Brainstorming is a helpful process for coming up with an initial list of questions. This is often done with the program's producer or other colleagues.

Explore the story or topic. What is the purpose of the story? What does the audience need to know? What will listeners be interested in knowing?

- **Add dimension to the obvious.** "Why" questions are important. They open up room for exploration and can delve into what is not obvious.
- **Provide different perspectives.** Coming up with the list of interview questions may uncover a need to interview more than one person. For some interviews and stories, more than one perspective is needed.
- **Paint the picture.** Questions that ask the interview subject for description are important. They help listeners "see" the story or message.
- **Ensure the listeners are not left hanging.** Wrap-up questions close loose ends and answer anything that is still unclear.
- **Be simple and clear.** Questions should be short, simple and clear. For guidance, review the writing tips covered in "What to say." Multi-layered questions should never be part of an interview. They confuse the interview subject and the listeners.

Brainstorm:

1. Write down the interview subject's name.
2. Write down important facts discovered in the research.
3. Jot down all of the questions relating to each fact without excluding any of your ideas. Later, when you are clear about your angle, you can select which questions are the most relevant.

Questions should follow a logical order. Consider these guidelines:

- **The first question** shouldn't be too deep, complex or broad because you run the risk of losing focus or control of the interview.
- **Core questions** do not necessarily have to follow the chronology of events. You won't have time to cover everything, so focus your questions according to the key issues you want to address.
- **Follow-up questions** are used when the interviewer wants the subject to elaborate.
 - **Magic question:**
 - "Why?"
 - **Opening up questions** might start with:
 - "Tell me more"
 - "Take me back to the first time you..."
 - "What was going through your mind when"
 - **Pinning down questions** might start with:
 - "What do you mean when you say...?"
 - "Let's be more specific. Are you saying?"

[Asking difficult questions](#) may be a necessary part of the interview.

- "To recap...do you mean that?"
- **Closing questions** wrap up the interview.
 - "What's your message to..." (this works especially well for a profile or "soft" interview.)

Interview Location

The type of program often dictates where the interview is conducted. For example, if the interview subject is a guest on a talk show, the interview will probably be in the studio. If the interview is part of a live news report, the interview is likely to be live from the scene.

At other times, where the interview is done depends on the topic of the interview and the interview subject. Think about:

- The interview subject's time schedule. If she's busy and her comments are needed for the story, the interview may have to take place at her location, possibly her office, home or some other place.
- Whether the interview subject can travel to the studio. If the distance is too great, the interview could be done by phone.
- What other factors may affect the interview location.
- Whether background noise will add to the interview. For instance, an interview with a fishing captain may benefit from the noise of the ocean in the background.

Doing an interview on location means that all the recording equipment has to be taken along. Make a list of what will be needed and check the items off the list before leaving.

Well-managed background sound is a great way to give context to the interview, but remember that it can also ruin your recording if you're not careful. These [recording tips](#) offer ideas to ensure good technical quality in the field.

Radio Interviews: Conducting an Interview

Formal and informal interviews use the same skills:

- Listening
- Asking effective questions
- Sticking to the focus

These skills are part of everyday communication. This section will show how to polish these naturally learned skills and use them more consciously.

Compiled By Rich Culbertson

During the interview

Remember the presentation tips that were presented in an earlier section. For example:

- Talk one-on-one.
- Smile appropriately.
- Relax and breathe naturally.
- Speak at a natural pace, not too fast, not too slow and pause appropriately.

Use written questions to help stay focused and on track:

Ask **open-ended questions**--beginning with how, what, why--to encourage an interview subject to open up.

- Keep the questions **short and simple**. Never ask multi-layered questions that the interview subject struggles to understand.
- Ask **questions** to which there are only yes/no or one-word answers to pin down or focus the interview subject. (If she can't stop talking, for example!) A good follow up for many one-answer questions is "why?".
- Invite the interview subject to give **specific examples, experiences and stories**. For example, "Take us back to the first time you performed in public. What happened?".
- **Keep thinking of the listeners**. What would they want to ask?

During the interview:

- Show attention by using **eye contact, body language** and **repeating** key bits of information. ("You say you first started composing at the age of six. How did you start so young?") But be careful not to give too much audible feedback - like "mmm" or "OK." They sound irritating on radio and they'll cause you problems later if you have to edit the interview.
- Remember to help the interview subject come alive as a person and tell her story. **An interviewer should be responsive but does not steal the spotlight** or use the interview to show how clever she is.
- **If it is necessary to interrupt the interviewee, do it with a smile** as she takes a breath. Try not to raise the volume--or pitch--of your voice. Do not talk over what she is saying. It sounds aggressive.
- **Listen carefully**. These tips will help with [listening skills](#).
- **Ask follow-up questions**.

Track progress:

- **Watch the clock** and keep the interview paced to cover everything.
- **Know when to start bringing the conversation to a close**. Do it as naturally as possible. Don't say, "Well, I'm afraid we have to stop there. We've run out of time." The interviewee and the listeners will feel cheated. And you'll sound unprofessional.
- **Thank the person you interviewed simply**. Don't go overboard.

Module Summary

Recognize techniques used by radio practitioners.

- The module described **three techniques**: writing, presenting and interviewing.

Understand writing techniques associated with the radio.

- The key is to **write as you speak**.
- Keep things **simple and short**.
- The module also covered **story structure, sentence content, tone and word choice**.

Identify key practices for effective radio presentation.

- The module covered **two presentation principles**.
 - Talk as if addressing one listener.
- It also addressed the importance of **body position and gesturing**.
- Finally, the module described how **voice and body are interconnected** and gave tips for making the voice sound its best.

Identify different techniques used for radio interviews

- Interviewing is a primary way people interact on radio. This course covered **two types** of interviews:
 - The opening up interview
 - The pinning down interview
- The module covered some basic techniques for preparing and conducting interviews.
- Discuss how writing and presentation play a role in radio interviews.
- Both writing and presentation skills are needed to **successfully conduct an interview**.