

## **Scriptwriting masterclass with Tim Muffett, BBC Breakfast reporter: key points**

### **What is a script?**

- To produce a really well-rounded news story for radio or television you need to write a script.
- You'll need to bring together all the elements you've gathered in the process of your research. You might have facts, figures and interviews. For radio you'll have sounds and for TV you'll have filmed lots of images.
- When it's written you can record the script and then edit the news story together.

### **Cue writing:**

- A script needs to start with a cue. This is what the news presenter reads to introduce the reporter who'll go on to tell the whole story.
- The cue must include the most attention-grabbing facts, so keep it short and use simple words that everyone will understand. Entice people to watch your report.

### **Structure of script:**

- We always try to start our radio reports with some interesting sounds and television reports with the best pictures, it helps make sure people want to keep watching or listening.
- You need to write your script leaving gaps for short clips of your interviewees. So, listen through to your interviews and choose the best bits. Keep the clips nice and short – about 10-20 seconds.
- The idea is to write a few short sentences followed by an audio or visual clip which highlights a particular point or argument. Then write a few more sentences followed by a clip of the opposing view. This way, you end up with a balanced report.
- You might also want to include a clip of someone who can highlight the issue you're talking about or who has direct experience of the issue – for example in Tim's report about learning outdoors he talks to students who are on a field trip.

### **Writing to sounds/pictures:**

- Always think about the sounds or pictures which will make your report come alive.
- Many of your pictures will do the storytelling for you, so you don't need to state the obvious.
- However with radio scripts you need to be much more descriptive as people can't see what you're talking about.

### **Checking**

- It's always a good idea to get your scripts checked by someone else.
- Be careful what you write; make sure you're not writing something about someone that is untrue or as a journalist you could end up facing legal action.

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- And if you're including anyone under the age of 18 in your report, just use their first names to help protect their privacy.

## **Keep them short:**

- Don't make your scripts too long. People will switch off after a while. It's better to have 2 mins 30 secs of engaging radio or television than 15 minutes of boredom.
- In general we read our scripts at a rate of three words per second, so you can easily calculate how long your reports will be.