

Scriptwriting masterclass with Tim Muffett, BBC Breakfast reporter: transcript

Hello, my name's Tim Muffett and I'm a reporter on the BBC's Breakfast programme early every morning. Now I've just been out filming a piece about learning outdoors and how some people think it's better for children, that you learn more stuff. So we're going to have a look at the material we've recorded

I've gathered together lots of facts, figures and interviews. If you're working on radio you'll also need some sounds and on television, of course, you'll need some images. I'm going to put them altogether and write a script to get that information across to the viewers.

To start my piece will need a cue. A cue is what the presenters in the studio read to introduce the item – they want to engage the viewer, make the story as interesting as possible. So it's got to be 'grabby' it's got to get your attention and it shouldn't be too long, but short and snappy and concise

When it comes to writing your scripts you don't just want to repeat the points that the interviewees in your piece are going to make. You might just want to write some words at the beginning, then leave a gap for a soundbite, then write some more words and then bring in another soundbite from another person giving a different point of view. That way you can build up a nice balanced script.

I'm listening back to the points that Kate Humble has made in her interview and I'm writing down the best bits. That way, when I write my scripts I can write words leading into her soundbites which don't repeat what she says – because she says it very well herself.

If it's radio then you've got to be much more descriptive because people clearly can't see what it is you're saying.

Think about the sounds and the pictures that you've got and how they can make the story come alive.

So I'm just trying to find some of the best pictures that we recorded. There's some great stuff of this baby newt that the kids who go to school in a city haven't seen before in the wild. So this is really good stuff and could help tell the story.

It's important not to make your scripts too long. 10 or 15 minutes of boring TV or radio and people are likely to switch off. Often briefer is better, around two or two-and-a-half minutes.

Here we have special software that, when we're writing our scripts, tells us how long it's going to be. On average around three words a second is a good guide, so you can get some idea of how long your script on the page will be when it's put onto the screen.

There are some other really important points to remember. Try to get your script checked by someone else. A second pair of eyes might spot a mistake which you've missed. Here we have our bosses come and look at our scripts before we turn them into reports.

Also make sure everything you say is accurate, true and fair. As a journalist it's your responsibility to get things right. Get things wrong and you could face legal action.

And if you're interviewing children under the age of 18, just use their first names. Safeguarding children is one of the BBC's core values.