

Possible production ideas

Your production will need to be completed in a relatively short time (2 hours 15 mins), so plan carefully and be realistic about what you can achieve. Suggestions 3 and 4 require a certain amount of editing (i.e., access to equipment and previous practice in using it). Therefore, exercises 1 and 2 are recommended for beginners.

However, it will also be possible to practice editing on Wednesday during unit 2, and you can use material recorded during this exercise. So it would be possible to produce a small item on Tuesday and continue developing it on Wednesday (for example: on Tuesday, finish the text sections of a 'promo' as in suggestion 4, then on Wednesday, edit in music or other sound effects).

1. 'Life story'

Focusing on one member of the group, research and record a 4-5 minute interview in real time drawing out one or two significant / interesting stories from that person's life.

Preparation should include:

- Identifying someone who from your observation on the course so far you think has something interesting to say.
- Talking to the person without recording to draw out possible stories within their life (pre interview)
- Preparing a few questions that help draw out stories
- Preparing a cue that introduces the interview.

The interview should be done 'as live' and in real time, requiring no editing.

2. Reportage ("radio talk")

This involves writing a piece for radio that is then recorded. The idea is to observe some process or event (however small), make notes, and then tell a story about it. You write 'for the ear' so that it sounds as if you are talking to your listener. You should end up with a 3 minute 'talk' (about 550 words).

Possible topics are often very simple things:

- what goes on in the schoolyard during recess
- a walk around the farmers' market
- the skaters' scene on the steps of the public library
- any topic that involves observation, talking to people, then writing about it (no recording on site).

Your 'story' will be interesting to listen to if it has one or two characters and if everything happens in one place and in a relatively short time. So you don't want to observe a lot of things in passing, but rather a few things in detail, 'close up'. By talking to people you meet, you will be able to gather interesting impressions. When writing, try to avoid using "I" too often: your listeners should get the feeling that they are seeing what you saw. For comparison, think about how a sports reporter relates what is going on at an event.

3. Report on current local theme or event

Compile a 3-minute report about a local place, community activity or event. This will need to be near to the training venue (at Sunderland suggestions include a university facility or department, the national glass centre or the media business units). Produce a short piece with as much recorded atmosphere as possible. Other suggestions might be to include a short interview, actuality of events happening and a short introduction and commentary to shape the report. Depending on your planning, this will probably involve some editing, so consult the trainers in advance about your production idea and whether it will be realisable.

One way to avoid too much editing work would be to produce an advance report on an event that is coming up, and that you already know something about. You can research it a bit more (newspaper, telephone calls, internet) and then animate listeners to attend the event.

4. Promo aimed at particular target group to involve them in community media work

Scenario: As a community media group you have identified that a particular group of people (older people? women? people from a particular ethnic or language group?) is not taking part in programme making for the station. You want to design a 2 minute 'promo' to encourage them to get involved in some way. Before producing this you will need to discuss the following

1. What factors may be preventing them from getting involved?
2. What activities might draw them in to programme making activities?

The promo could simply be written and recorded or include dramatised scenes or interview clips and music (which would involve editing).

Example

Group identified: 13 -15 year old young women

Factors preventing participation in station: lack of confidence or skills, domination of youth club activities (like DJ-ing) by young men.

Suggested activity to be promoted: Young woman's DJ-ing workshop at local youth club-leading to new radio programme focusing on young women's culture and music