

Handy hints for writing scripts

A script should be clear and easy to read, so make sure it:

- is typed
- has double line spacing
- uses a clear font such as ARIAL
- is neither too big or too small, 12 point is usually fine.

In addition ...

- don't carry sentences over page breaks
- number all pages
- use one side of the paper only

The idea is that someone should be able to pick up the script and read it easily straight away. For reference, this sheet has been typed in Arial12 point, so that should give you an idea of how large your type needs to be so that it is comfortable for you.

Enter in technical details that you need, as the script should also be there as a guide to the technical operator. (But, by underlining, make it clear what is a technical detail, so that this is not read out by mistake!)

Once you've typed the script, run a spell checker through it to make sure you've not misspelled anything or left out words. It's quite easy to make mistakes, and you don't want to be spotting them for the first time when you are reading the script live in the studio! One essential safeguard is to sit down beforehand and carefully read the script out loud, this will help you to find mistakes and find out what is comfortable for you to read.

There is one thing to remember when writing a radio script and that's to

“write for the ear and not the eye”

Put very simply, this means that everything you write has to be easily understood when heard for the first time by a listener. Think about the following...

Be exact - what is it that you are trying to say? Often your point can become lost in an over-detailed or rambling script.

Be familiar - use words and phrases that are common usage, there are no points for being clever!

Be yourself - don't try to be something you're not, you need to be comfortable with what you say.

Be natural - talk, as you would be in everyday life. Use the same kind of phrases and so on.

One key thing to remember is that the radio works as a communication form, since people often see it as a friend. That is a useful thing to bear in mind when writing or presenting scripts. You should think of how you would say things to people you know. We would never be formal with friends, nor would we talk down to them. The same rules apply to radio.

One thing you could do to make life easier is to spell out any difficult words phonetically (fo-ne-tik-cal-ee) as this should help you pronounce them much more easily!

- Avoid long, complicated sentences: if in doubt, keep sentences short and sweet.
- Watch out when using abbreviations or abstract concepts – they may need to be 'translated' into everyday language.
- Use **contractions** where possible to sound more natural, for example, can't, you're, she'll.

One last thing... **Keep the listener tuned in!** Use language, content or entertainment to keep people listening. Think about what you write, read it out loud, see if it works. Not only should your script be easy to follow, it should have something in there to keep people listening.