

Anchor and Announcer Training Class Content and Curriculum (primarily for News, Public Affairs and Community Calendar)

In order to communicate clearly an announcer's delivery, enunciation and articulation is vitally important and necessary in the radio medium. It must be understandable (as much as can be reasonably expected) to the lowest common broadcast denominator ie: the crappiest little busted speaker, receiving a less than ideal signal.

ACTIVITY: Go around the room and very briefly introduce yourselves. The instructor will demonstrate over enunciating. Now go around the room again and have each person over enunciate their names. Most probably the class will not over enunciate but will say their name precisely as they should on the radio, rarely some ham will embrace the concept and truly *over* enunciate.

"Styles" preferred by KBOO for news anchoring and announcing in Public Affairs, and Community Calendar: what may be an appropriate style of delivery on a mainstream radio station may not be the best suited for KBOO. KBOO, like other community and public radio stations, opts for a "real person" approach. That being said, it does not mean that KBOO wants an unprofessional sound, just not what one might expect on a commercial radio station. You should sound like the best version of YOURSELF.

Style differences for announcers, community calendar readers and anchors: announcing headlines is done with a slightly more exaggerated dynamic than when reading news copy. News mid heads should be read with a less formal tone than news copy and each day's particular events should be reflected in the overall tone of the complete broadcast, headlines, mid heads and sign offs. If the daily news is especially grim, even the ordinarily casually announced news mid heads and cordial sign offs should be read in toned down manner. This would be a subtle tweak that ideally you wouldn't necessarily notice. People *will* notice an inappropriately jolly or too perky of demeanor in the same broadcast. Community calendars are exempt from this as they are not a news program per se however somber calendar events may require a tempered reading. Again, it should be almost imperceptible. It is not KBOO's M.O. to sensationalize a story or show emotional strain when relaying a distressing news story, maintain your composure, adopt a serious tone, show concern, but not outright distress. Contained wry raw, glee, sometimes, cannot be suppressed, but it's the news, try not to slap your knee or guffaw into the mic.

ACTIVITY: have class pair off and hold conversations in "oob eeb" ie: "oob oob eeb oob oob" "eeb eeb oob oob oob eeb" First have them have a monotone, then sing songy, then in a maudlin or over modulated tone (think AM radio ads), then with different emotions (distress, anxiety, boredom etc.), lastly, with an announcing voice and in a natural conversational style -- aaaahhh just right.

Make time to rehearse!

Live Anchors & announcers should arrive at the station at least one half hour before air, respectfully request your copy in advance, read it out loud, repeating difficult words until they are comfortable in your mouth. Underline operatives and mark spots for breaths. **Do you understand what you have just read? Are you pronouncing names and words correctly and in the proper context? Are you sure? REALLY SURE?** If not, get help! Cold reads are a LAST RESORT.

Proper pronunciation of names and places is essential to accurate reporting and credibility!!! Should the unthinkable happen and there is no choice but to make a cold read, scan the copy quickly, find trouble spots and find time -- even if you have to take an impromptu music break -- to find the proper pronunciation of that wacky Icelandic volcano, do not try and power through. unless it is absolutely necessary. This is why it is so **important to get your copy early and read it through, OUT LOUD**, beforehand, so you can mark your breathing points and operatives, discover the embarrassing unintended rhyme or over alliteration, to make necessary changes and, of course, catch that unknown word or, unknown usage of a seemingly ordinary word, that may not be pronounced the way it is ordinarily. If it doesn't make sense, double check with producers, this sort of cooperation and teamwork makes for the best possible broadcasts.

Should you ever find yourself reading news in a paid position, **avoidable mistakes like this will often hold your employment in the balance. Getting names wrong in cases of death or criminal acts are considered slander and make stations vulnerable to lawsuits.**

Communication

Learn and use standard hand signals with your engineer, **there is no replacement for eye contact and hand signals for speed of communication**, the board operator may be able to speak to you through the talk back circuit, but live, in studio with live mics you will only have your hands and whatever psychic abilities you/they may possess for speedy communication.

Standard Hand Signals:before turning on an anchor's mic, the board op should let them know, using the talk-back mic sub-signal to the anchors headphones to "**Stand-by quiet. I am bringing up your mic**" the anchor and board op should confirm with eye contact or announcer may nod. The operator will then **raise** their **arm** with a **pointing index finger high above** their head signaling the anchor that, yes in fact I am bringing up your microphone. At this point the anchor must **stand-by quiet** but not assume anything until the operator **points at them to cue them that their mic is officially on**. Unless anchors/announcers have arranged beforehand to a special signal when to fade a theme, this is the point at which anchors are expected to begin reading their copy.

When there are two anchors reading copy alternately, or the board op needs signaling to begin an audio segment **you must cue one another using the same set of hand signals**. Cuing one another in advance of the toss off by raising your arm with pointing index finger one or two sentences before the end of copy and cue for next audio clip or anchor reading.

The board operator should give time warnings at one minute, 30 seconds, standby quiet at fifteen seconds and bring mics up for toss to anchor.

ACTIVITY: Students record themselves cold reading a few written sentences using hand signals to signal back and forth. Now think about the following trouble spots:

Sing songy or patterned reading, popping P's or B's, mumbling, throwing away ends of sentences, reading down into paper going off mic. Bass proximity effect. Over modulation (pegging out) laughing and yelling into microphone, under modulation (weak signal, too quiet), being off mic, not projecting (not enough air pushing out your words), over styled or over modulated like AM radio ads or announcers of early to mid twentieth century.

Noise: lip smacks, breathing, clothing, jewelry, PAPERS, touching mic after it is on, leaning, tapping or pounding table.

Not allowing for punctuation or reading without understanding meaning.

Pronunciation of words, names and places, think about the difference an under enunciated contraction can make with an under articulated and unclear "couldn't" or "wouldn't".

Inappropriate tone, rhythm, tempo and pacing, too fast or too slow. Staccato, clipped and/or flat, monotone speaking. The space between the words or the words themselves are too long or short. Too many pauses. Saying "and" "or" "uh" "um", clicking tongue.

Trouble Shooting: tips on breathing

ACTIVITY: here's a one minute breathing lesson, tear a long feather light piece of paper and hold one inch in front of your mouth and put fingers of the opposite hand on the bridge of your nose and talk in a nasal voice saying "kneeee" "kneeee" so you feel the vibration in your nose, notice that the paper does not move as much as when you alternately put your hand on your belly and make husky "huh" sounds. The "huh" sounds force you to move your abdomen, this is the area crucial for a proper intake of breath, again, **abdomen extension** is critical to obtain ample air. Don't suck in your gut but, rather, sit up straight, relax your belly, and fill your entire lungs, now, expel each breath in a measured way, so as not to run out of breath too quickly, while still allowing for necessary projection "huuuuuuuuuh", Now, take deep breaths and watch your belly, relax and try again, extend it more and see if you can feel the difference.

ACTIVITY: Hold your paper 4 inches away and demonstrate how words beginning with B's and P's project extra air in a focused direction, focused at a microphone these will cause popping and distortion. Minimize this effect by holding your upper lip taut or smile when you say a string of P or B words into your paper. Notice how by directing air we can avoid this most distracting of microphone pitfalls.

Use open mouth intake of breath to combat breath noises and/or turn your head to the side to

take in breathes. Vocal warm-ups clear your throat and avoid any unpleasant surprises. Good and poor posture affects reading, hold your paper up so as to not cut off your wind pipes and/or cause you to go off mic as having your papers low will.

Methods of improving articulation; tongue twisters and singing are useful vocal warm ups before each session of anchoring or voicing and reinforce good articulation and enunciation. A rigorous exercise is to stick two fingers or a cork into ones mouth and speak in such a way as to be understood even in a noisy environment, this requires very succinct articulation and enunciation.

ACTIVITY: class suggests and performs a few tongue twisters and a game of telephone with fingers in mouth exercise :oP

If you feel your reading is still sounding too “read” you can try to rectify the situation by imagining one person, an equal, preferably someone you like, and speak directly to them. Often an anchor will sound too “read” if their reading is unnaturally over-syncoated or staccato, however this is precisely the style preferred when quoting someone to make saying “quote” and “unquote” unnecessary. Often a piece will sound unnatural or “read” because it is somewhat over modulated -- not in volume -- but in a highly stylized cadence popular throughout the twentieth century by legendary newsmen like Edward R, Murrow, Walter Cronkite, or Sam Donaldson, which is a more formal or modulated style than the more real person, conversational delivery preferred at KBOO.

Engineers feel an overall failing when it comes to mic technique is “Staying on mic”, “Get on mic and don’t move” is their hope. That being said there are still times when being “on mic” is not desired, we don’t need to hear noses breathing. Laughing or getting excited and raising voices will over modulate and distort, remember to turn your head when you laugh or raise your voice, returning your mouth to the same spot, your special spot, where you have found you sound best. In a panel situation or where you are interviewing more than one person, you may need to address several directions and will need to turn your head, a good trick to staying on mic is to imagine a string from your mouth to the microphone.

Learn the proper distances for each of the different microphones in use at KBOO: 4 to 6 (some recommend 8) inches from the RE27’s and RE20’s, [the long silver mics], and 1 to 1 and 1/2 inches from the SM7’s, [the smaller, black, half fabric covered mics] -- Sound Engineer, Jay Bozich say’s “Eat it” but maybe I am embellishing.

Remember, always **USE YOUR HEADPHONES** and note the difference in receptivity when you use various production room microphones.

Regaining Composure: if you make a mistake, say quickly and without too much emphasis “rather” then state the correction. Be aware of underlying emotions coming through on mic.

ACTIVITY: record class reading copy they have practiced out loud and prepared with marks

listen to both before and after versions together.

(April, 2011 E Young)

More specific information on Microphones & Mic Techniques

Listen When You Record

It is always a good idea to listen with headphones when recording. If you really have to take them off at least check everything with them on and watch the levels on your recorder.

Popping Ps

Some people have problems with popping Ps. A windscreen on the microphone should help with this. You can also adjust the angle you are talking into it from. Try talking over or across the microphone, not directly into it. If this is a problem for you, you should experiment with how to not get these loud explosive sounds when saying letters like P which quickly push air at the microphone, momentarily overloading it.

Bass Proximity Effect

With some microphones when sounds get close to them more bass is picked. This means if you record with a mic, which has Bass proximity effect, really close to someone's mouth his or her voice will sound lower pitched.

Overloading Mics

Microphones can be overloaded, this sounds bad. Even if you turn down the input to your recorder so the levels look good, if you are recording in a very loud environment you can get a static/clipping noise on your recording. If you are listening with headphones you can usually hear this but in loud conditions it isn't always easy to hear what's coming from your headphones. If you have to turn down the input levels a lot in order to get a good level on your recorder it is a good idea to try to move the mic somewhere quieter.

Cables/Jacks

Most microphones have a connection for an XLR cable. XLR is a higher quality, mono, balanced, cable/adaptor. Almost all mini-disc recorders have a stereo mini (1/8th inch) mic input jack. It is important to use a cable with a stereo jack on it, you can ruin your mini-disc input by using a mono jack, which is slightly larger. The cable can be mono it's just the mini plug on the end. A stereo plug has two lines on the metal part, and a mono only has one line.

Don't jiggle cables

You can create clicks/pops and drop-outs if you jiggle or move cables. Sometime it doesn't matter but if any of the connections are loose or the contacts aren't clean and secure you can ruin the sound you are recording.

Microphone pick-up patterns

Some mics pick up ("hear") sound coming from all directions, these are called omni-directional. Others pick up sound coming from either side, bi-directional, or in front and somewhat to the sides but not really behind, cardioid (the pick up pattern is kind of heart shaped), or very much just in front, hyper-cardioid, often called a shotgun mic. Cardioid mics are sometimes just called directional. When recording ambience, crowd noise, etc. omni-directional mics are nice but when recording interviews they can pick up more noise.

There are also stereo mics which are really two directional mics pointing in opposite directions.

Voice Techniques and Reminders **This was mainly written by Vicki Post**

*Important Note #1: The sound quality of your story should be as consistent as possible. If you make a mistake while doing your voicework, revoice the whole paragraph. Cutting, pasting and editing one sentence at a time sacrifices consistency and sounds awful! If you want to add something to your story after you have done voicing, DO THE VOICEWORK OVER AGAIN. You can hear when someone has inserted something into the story from a different voicework session.

*Important Note #2: Do not cut out breaths when editing, even when pressed for time. Do not edit out spaces between words or breaths to cut the story time down, because it sounds unnatural. If you do too much cutting and pasting, your story will sound jumpy, like an "audio ransom note!"

Reminders

*When you read the news, you are, in essence, the storyteller and the performer. It is your voice that provides color and life to the story.

*Be present and energetic while you read, and your audience will stay present with you.

*Being objective or balanced does not necessarily mean being neutral, monotone or boring.

*You have your own unique voice and reading style. The key is to make them work for you.

Techniques

*Breathe fully. Breathing will help you get through almost any difficulty, including low energy, nasal sound, tickle in your throat, etc.

*Use the full range of your voice, not forgetting the middle. This will allow your reading to be more dynamic, it will also help your listeners to distinguish between facts and different people

you may be quoting.

*Vary your pace, volume and pitch.

*Mark your script so you know which words or phrases you wish to emphasize.

*The more you can relax, the better you will read.

*Practice by telling your story before writing it. Get to know your own style, so you can write for it.

*Practice, practice, practice and have fun.

More Voice Tips

*Relax and warm up.

*Be sure to get enough air in your lungs. Use air to project the sound.

*Be aware of where the sound is (it should go from the diaphragm, up the back of the neck, to the head, and out of the mouth).

*Keep jaws rounded and do not smile too widely.

*Put your body into your reading.

*Try standing up, it increases your lung capacity which can make you sound better and let you breath less often, nice if you have trouble finishing sentences.

*Listen to yourself.

*Keep voice controlled at all times.

*Try to avoid the following: Taking excessively loud breaths, breathing through your mouth, smacking your lips, clicking your tongue, clearing your throat or loud swallowing.

Sound and Style

*Think about what you are reading- Proper emphasis will enhance your story.

*Put some punch in your reading.

*Organize the punch.

*Watch your diction.

*Avoid the following: singing or whining, exaggerating the punch, lapsing into monotone.

*Listen to yourself as you read.