



How to Prepare a 4-H Radio Public Service Announcement

The field of broadcasting continues to influence a much wider array of career possibilities. With the expansion of radio station formats and cable TV, people need broader communications skills at an earlier age to fit into today's job market. A 4-H Radio PSA is a pre-recorded public service announcement. 4-H members are encouraged to prepare PSA's to help promote 4-H locally or statewide. Typically non-profits such as 4-H receive free PSA's when there is a gap to fill on the radio daily schedule.

The ability to write and deliver a message which conveys a complete thought in sixty seconds or less is the reality of both broadcast and personal communications. For this reason, radio public service announcements have been added to the county, regional and state 4-H Public Speaking Contest.

For the Public Service Announcement (P.S.A.) division of public speaking the emphasis is on the presentation of a P.S.A. for radio. For that reason, scoring is based on the content of the material and the delivery. Appearance and gestures do not enter into the judging at this time.

A.I.D.A. Formula for Writing Copy

A. Attention. Get the listener's attention. Hopefully, something that doesn't sound like all the other commercials. Sometimes it can be a sound effect. It can be a question, but don't get caught starting every commercial that way! The object is to divert their attention to the radio

I. Interest. Now that you have their attention, it is time to create the desire for whatever it is you're selling. For example- "There's no reason to ever clean your gutters again with Gutter Clean!"

D. Desire. Now that you have the listener's interest, create a desire for the idea or product. For example, "Climbing on your sloped roof, or on an unstable ladder can be dangerous, but NOT cleaning gutters can mean expensive repairs to your foundation! Once you install Gutter Clean, you'll never have to clean those gutters again! Ever!"

A. Action. Get them to act on the desire you've created. For example - "Take that short drive to Wal-Mart for a lifetime of clean gutters and save 20 percent until December 20th!"

Whether it's a product or a service, the formula works the same way.

Don't use sound effects or music unless it actually adds something to the commercial. It's easy to go overboard and detract from the message with "too much extra stuff".

When using a music background, don't make it recognizable, or people will pay more attention to the music than the message. It is illegal to use music that is copyrighted without permission. Obtaining rights is very expensive.

Make sure the commercial is not too long, even by one second. If it is, most stations will not run it. The best rule (and the rule used by most radio and TV stations) is 60 seconds should actually be 59 seconds. It usually takes about 150 words for a 60 second PSA.

Written Notes for Preparation of P.S.A.'s

1. Type on one side of the paper only.
2. Double or triple space, and don't type in all capital letters as they are hard to read in quantity.
3. Never continue a paragraph or sentence from one page to another.
4. Never split words or hyphenated phrases from one line to the next.
5. It's best not to use abbreviations as the word they represent may not come to you as they are being spoken.

6. Use contractions whenever possible. Your talk should be given in conversational style, as if you were speaking to just one person. NOTE/EXAMPLE: Contractions should not be used when you wish to emphasize a certain word. But don't shy away from them where appropriate.
7. If a title is to be used for a person mentioned in the talk, give the title first. It's usually best to use the title the first time only when mentioning a person's name.
8. Don't include middle initials unless they are widely known by initials as part of their name. (For example, more people would know the poet e. e. cummings by that name than if a first name were spelled out.)
9. It's important that you be able to pronounce everything correctly. Use phonetic spelling for difficult words.
10. Balance your sentences and keep them simple. Avoid long ones or short choppy ones.
Simplify numbers or statistics by using generalizations such as: about, nearly, almost, at least.
11. In general:

- Catch the listener's attention with a striking or interesting statement.
- Elaborate or clarify this statement.

Delivery Tips

Practice your radio presentation. Choose a listener who will give you suggestions on how you can improve your delivery. Speak clearly

in a normal, conversational, friendly tone. Think of yourself as talking to one person close by, not to a big crowd. Your aim should be to talk, not read, to the listener. Project your personality. Sell your audience on the points you're making. Be persuasive. Enthusiasm and sincerity will help convince the listener that you believe in what you're saying.

Talk at a natural speed, but avoid monotony. Vary the pitch and volume of your voice to get variety, emphasis and attention.

Take breaths between units of thoughts rather than randomly. Make your voice pleasant; a smile on your face will put a smile in your voice. Watch enunciation and pronunciation.

Read your PSA out loud:

- Is it the right length?
- Does it sound like something you would hear on the radio?
- Is the headline catchy and interesting?
- Edit your PSA carefully to be sure all of the information is correct.

Working with a Microphone

Place the microphone directly in front of you. This position is called "on the beam". Speaking close to the microphone makes the voice sound more pleasing and gives "presence" to the voice. Radio broadcasters typically sit down with their elbows on the table while they are on the air. A person in such a seated position tends to have a conversational style of delivery. Standing may

trigger platform habits such as vocal projection or pacing. Imagine that two friends are on the other side of the microphone. Talk to them, not to the microphone. This means that you won't shout into the microphone because you don't shout at friends at that distance. When sitting, hold your copy in front of you. If you look down to read, your air passage will not open enough to allow you to breathe correctly. Use your natural voice.

4-H Radio PSA Contest

A 4-H member is eligible to participate in this contest which is held in conjunction with the county 4-H Public Speaking Contest. The PSA must be 60 seconds in length. The subject has to relate to 4-H and be general enough so it could be used anywhere in the state. Contact the local county extension office for more information.

Additional 4-H Communications resources include:

- The Versatile 4-H Presentation
- The Four P's of Planning A Presentation
- Getting Ready to Give a 4-H Presentation
- Presentation Visuals
- Using PowerPoint® in 4-H Presentations
- Evaluating a 4-H Presentation
- How to Prepare a Multimedia Presentation
- How to Prepare a 4-H Radio Public Service Announcement

Visit the Nebraska 4-H Web site for additional resources (<http://4h.unl.edu>).

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