



“Making Your Point”

General Videography Tips for PSA’s

Public Service Announcements, or PSA’s, can be an effective way to deliver your message to a large audience. The process of creating audio PSA’s, like the ones you hear on the radio, is very similar to the steps you take to create video PSA’s for television or the Internet. This guide, adapted from the *3...2..1..Action! Facilitators Guide*, provides useful information on scriptwriting and speaking skills, along with filming tips for those creating video PSA’s.

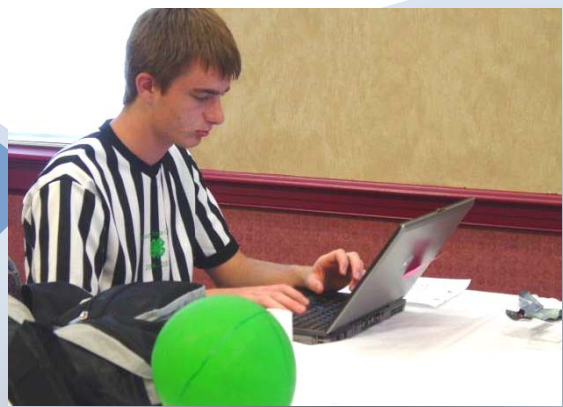
Writing Scripts

Most of the rules of good writing apply to video scriptwriting. The information written for a narrator to read on tape is called “copy.” The copy can be read from off-camera, so viewers see some other picture while they hear the narrator. Or the copy can be memorized or read (using cue cards or a cueing device such as a TelePrompTer) so viewers see the “talent” on-camera as he or she talks. A few tips for adapting writing for video follow. (Note: The same rules apply if you are adapting activities for audiocassette recordings or radio productions.)

- Write clearly and simply.
- Write in a conversational tone.
- Keep your sentences short.
- Use first and second person (For example, “You can make a difference...”).
- Use action verbs such as “join,” “come,” “write,” and “buy.”
- Use words that clearly communicate and conjure up powerful emotional images.
- Use comparisons and metaphors. A metaphor is an indirect comparison between two subjects that are seemingly unrelated (i.e., “life is a dream”).
- Edit your copy. Take out unnecessary words and change verbs to communicate action and present tense.
- Use a stopwatch to time yourself or your narrator reading the copy. Limit the number of words so you can easily read the copy within the number of seconds you need to fill. For a 60-second spot or commercial, you will probably need to limit the script to about 75-100 words. Eliminate words or sentences if the copy cannot be read clearly within the amount of time you wish.
- Read the script aloud and rehearse it before you do any taping. Listen to be sure it’s clear and easy to understand. Read it aloud to someone else and ask if he or she can understand your message. Make any changes you need to keep the message clear, simple, understandable, and as powerful as possible.

Did You Know?

Free audio editing software can be found at
<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/download/>



Speaking Skills for PSA's

Most of the rules of good speaking and presentation skills apply to video as well. Here are a few tips to help you become a better on-camera presenter, or "talent." For additional information on public speaking skills, see "Making Your Point: Building Public Speaking Skills" on the 4-H website.

Audio Skills

- A strong confident voice will make your message more believable. Speak up!
- How do you make your voice sound strong and confident? Relax, breathe deep, lower your voice and project from your diaphragm.
- Vary your pitch, volume and pacing to hold viewers' interest.
- Try to sound like yourself! Imagine that you are speaking to a friend rather than to a microphone. Try to avoid sounding like you are reading from a book, monotonous or "singsongy."
- Enunciate, and speak very clearly.
- Find a comfortable, medium speed. Do not talk too fast or too slow.
- Exaggerate your delivery and put strong emphasis on key words. Be dramatic.

Video Skills

- Keep your facial expressions appropriate to your words. That is, do not smile or smirk if the message is serious. Smile and look joyful if the message is positive or heartwarming.
- Watch a network newscaster or reporter and pay attention to his/her pitch, speed, facial expressions, gestures, etc. What did you notice?
- Stand up straight, look people in the eye and do not fidget.
- Eye contact is extremely important and powerful. If you want to look directly at your video audience, look at the camera lens as if it were the familiar eyes of your best friend. Do not let your eye stray away from the camera lens while it's recording. Wandering eyes make you look shifty and insecure. Practice by saying your script as you look at an eye-level mark on the wall. As with most things in life, the more you practice, the better you will become at this.
- Use hand gestures only if appropriate. Effective hand gestures come from being relaxed and spontaneous. (Playing with your hair, scratching and rubbing your knuckles are not effective hand gestures!)
- If you are using a hand-held microphone, hold it about four inches away from your mouth.
- Just do it! Almost everyone is nervous about speaking in front of groups (and cameras)! The more you do it, the better and the easier it gets.

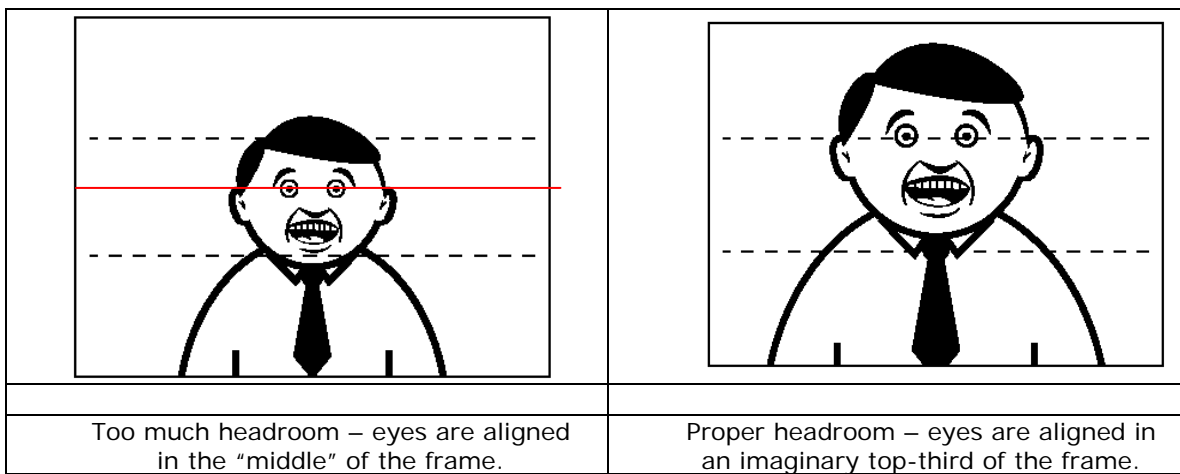
Did You Know?

Missouri 4-H, in partnership with the U.S. Army, sponsors special "3..2..1..Action!" events during the year. If you would like to learn advanced videography skills, watch for one in your area! Be sure to visit the "Operation Military Kids" portion of the State 4-H website: <http://4h.missouri.edu/go/programs/military/>



Filming Tips

- Use a tripod! There's a time and place for the "shaky-cam," but use a tripod when you can.
- Avoid excessive panning (left and right) tilting (up and down) and zooming in and out of a shot. It is better to lock the camera in one place, let the action happen in the frame, stop the camera, re-adjust the shot and start shooting again.
- Make sure the scene is well lit. Use as much natural light as possible.
- Use an external microphone whenever possible! The microphones built into the cameras are only good for getting "natural sound." But if you are doing an interview, you will definitely need to attach a microphone to the speaker. Nothing is more annoying than to listen to a narrator in a busy hallway or large, echoing room.
- Frame your shots with the "rule of thirds." The natural tendency for most people is to put a speaker's eyes or a horizon in the middle half of the frame. This causes too much "head-room" and just an overall awkward-looking shot. It's better to frame the speaker's eyes along an imaginary top-third line of the frame leaving marginal space for their head and the top of the frame.



- Oftentimes, when someone is done talking on-camera, they will quickly look at someone else off-camera for approval ("was that OK?") or to see if they are done. This tends to look awkward. Instead, have the speaker keep looking at the camera until you call "cut."
- Add some "padding" at the start of the action and at the end – about 5 seconds after starting recording and at the end. This will give you some room for editing the shot or between transitions. If someone is talking on-camera, start recording, wait about 5 seconds, and then alert him or her to start talking. When they are done, keep recording for about 5 seconds, stop the camera, and then call "cut!"

Did You Know?

Your county 4-H Youth Specialist or YPA can check out a digital video camera from the State 4-H Office!