

THE F.A.C.E.

BEHIND THE VOICE



Friendly

1. When you read for a Talking Newspaper, the most important thing to remember is that **you are reading the paper aloud to a friend**. Forget “the listeners” – everyone who hears the recording listens as an individual, a single person hearing you talking to them. Try to have an image in your mind of the **one person** you are talking to. You may find it easiest to read to the colleague sitting opposite you at the recording session.
2. If you are tense, it will be heard in your voice. **Relax**. Take a deep breath, drop your shoulders, smile and try again. You will hear the difference.
3. **Smiling**, or frowning, can be heard as well as seen – let your face react to the story and your response will be reflected in your voice for the listener.
4. **Read through in advance** – give yourself a decent chance and check through what you’ve got to read before it comes out of your mouth. Misprints occur in the best-edited newspapers and reading the material first means you have seen them coming and can make sense of the story for the listener.
5. Read with the **text flat** in front of you so that your **hands are free**. Now you can use them to illustrate what you are saying. Although your listener cannot see what you are doing, the action will help you to stress the right words naturally.

Accurate

6. **Check** how to pronounce **difficult names** or unfamiliar words. People can take offence if their name is mispronounced. Check with your fellow readers. If you are in an area with a racially diverse population, it may be worth compiling a list of prominent names, together with their phonetic spelling, to keep in the recording room for reference.
7. **Numbers** can be confusing. If the piece you are reading contains percentages, generally round them to the nearest whole number. Only bother with decimals if the story hinges on the precise difference between two figures. You will often find that the sense is better conveyed by using fractions instead (e.g. read “68%” as “just over two thirds”) – most people have an immediate mental image of two thirds, but may take time to grasp 68%.
8. Take particular care to speak clearly when reading out **addresses or phone numbers** – read these details **slowly and repeat**. The same goes for email and web addresses.
9. Try to humanise “press shorthand” and turn it into spoken language, for example in Deaths notices. “Smith, John ‘Jack’ aged 89 years peacefully at home” sounds much better as “John Smith, known as Jack, died peacefully at his home aged 89.”

Clear

10. Remember that your eyes and brain process the information on the page much faster than you can speak it. As a result, the temptation is to speak quickly. **It is important to read slowly and clearly** so that the listener can hear and understand what is being said.

11. It is obviously vital to make what you read **as clear as possible** – you can re-read at a glance, your listener only has the one chance to understand what they hear. Read through the text first, make sure you understand it yourself, and think about which are the most important words to stress. Stressing **the wrong words** isn't helpful – **Stressing the right words** makes it **easy** for the listener.
12. **Clarity** of speech largely **depends on the speaker's lips and tongue**. These must move, perhaps more than you think, to enable you to read clearly. Try looking in a mirror and saying something, then imagine trying to lip-read yourself. Now try again: that's better!
13. **Breathing** is important. You need deep breaths to carry your voice through a sentence – short breaths mean the voice gives out, which may make you pause or stress inappropriate words and so distort the sense. Practise breathing deeply, and make sure you are sitting up straight to read (nothing to do with deportment: it gives your chest room to expand and hold a good breath).
14. **Mistakes do happen** – don't worry! Just apologise, correct yourself and carry on just as you would in normal conversation. Your listener needs you to make sense of what they have heard, so if someone has a coughing fit or hears their mobile ringing, or if you hear fireworks, rioting or a brass band outside ... briefly explain what's going on and then carry on reading.

Entertaining

15. **Be interested** – if you're bored, so will your listener be!
16. Try to **vary the pace and stress of your reading**: it helps your listener understand. You do it in conversation intuitively – try to make your reading sound as natural as that. Avoid a steady-paced, monotonous delivery... you risk sending the listener (and possibly your fellow readers) to sleep!
17. There are different ways of **emphasising** a word or phrase:
 - a. Pause – either before, to command attention; or after, to let it sink in.
 - b. Stress – speak louder and with more 'punch'.
 - c. Sustained tone – 'stretch' the word (as if you were singing it).
18. **Make sure quotations are not lost** in the body of the piece. Authors use speech marks – you need to mark the change with your voice. Don't try to do an impression of the speaker, but even a tiny pause before and after a quote tells the listener that someone else is speaking.
19. **Pictures**: Describing any pictures accompanying the text can bring a piece to life. Don't just read the caption (it's probably only a repeat of the text anyway): **tell the listener what you can see**. It's like looking out of the window at something out of your friend's view. What can you see?

Finally:

Please don't be offended if the Recorder asks you to... slow down, speak up or keep still – the Recorder is the only listener present in the room and it is their job to ensure the recording is audible and intelligible. Please act on their advice.

Please do your utmost to **avoid any paper rustling** – microphones are very sensitive and pick up the sound, making it difficult for the listener to hear what is being read. **Handle papers as little as possible**.

It is a good idea to ask for a copy of the recording so that you can **listen to yourself from time to time ... you may be surprised at what you sound like**. You can also learn from hearing other people what works well and what doesn't.



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