

“Whatever touches the heart will always be engraved on the mind.”

-Voltaire

Writing for Radio by David Candow – PRPD 2005

The problem we face with writing for radio is that our years of scholarship have taught us to write for the eye. Therefore, when we read what we have written, we accept it because it was meant for the eye. Another problem in writing for radio is that radio isn't an exact science, and therefore it is very difficult to set rules about how we are to work in it. Our task is to make speech, not writing. The main difference is structure. We simply don't talk like we write. What we write, someone has to speak. The following is a list of **yellow flags** that someone writing for radio would do well to consider in order to enhance performance:

1. A long phrased introduction to a sentence. In 1945 when American service people were returning to their homeland from the long war in Europe and the South Pacific, Joe Andrews.....
2. The use of a participle or gerund (any word ending in ~ing) at the beginning of a sentence. e.g. *Walking into the lights of the television camera, the governor's eyes blinked.*
3. The use of a participle or gerund halfway through a sentence. In this case, the voice will be passive and you will have linked two separate thoughts. e.g. *President Clinton presented the head of the American Cancer Society with a cheque for \$1,700,000, hoping it would help them find a cure.*
4. The words **which** or **that** are strong indicators that you are about to write a subordinate clause. Put a full stop in front of them, and begin a new sentence. e.g. *Congressmen debated the bill vigorously, which they thought was to their own political advantage.*
5. The use of a conjunction in the middle of a sentence indicates you are linking two thoughts. e.g. *The use of a conjunction in the middle of a sentence indicates you are linking two thoughts and it is to be avoided at all costs in speech.*
6. The verb **to be** is the only verb in the language that has no action in it. e.g. "She is sick." (The verb indicates the state of being.) How do you know she is sick? Write about how you know she is sick, as in: "She was lying on the floor. She was too weak to pull herself up."
7. Homonyms and Sound-Alikes: the ear can't distinguish between them. e.g. *"The Cleveland Indians scored two runs; the Boston Red Sox one" and "sex" vs. "sects."*
8. Sibilants: words that slip and slide. e.g. *"She asserted she was seeking new assistants."*
9. Clichés: There is an element of truth in a cliché, that's why we occasionally tempted to use them. Again it could also be a missed writing opportunity
10. Two people of the same gender in a sentence can cause confusion in the sentences that follow if you depend on a pronoun. e.g. *A teenager from Minnesota went to his grandfather's house where he got his rifle. He shot his grandfather and his girlfriend. A woman he had known for years.*

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