

How to Write a Radio Ad

If you're looking for an effective medium to get the word out about your business, radio advertising is an excellent choice. The right radio ad can help build brand awareness, drive traffic to your store, and keep your company top-of-mind in the decision-making process. For radio advertising to be effective, however, you need the perfect script. If you're struggling to write the ad script, here are some tips that can help.

Successful radio advertisements motivate consumers to take action with powerful words, catchy jingles, and attention-grabbing sound effects. Radio ads have to hold their audience's attention 15, 30, or 60 seconds so that they provide all of the relevant information. In order to achieve this balance, ads must remain persistent and creative.

You have one chance to grab the listener, and one chance only. In radio advertising, we call this the hook. The hook is what sells the ad. And you have to sell the ad to sell the product.

Sounds simple, right? But because we're all bombarded relentlessly by huge number of other advertisers who are trying to do the same, it is the most difficult thing to do. This is why you must immediately provoke the listeners' curiosity, imagination or surprise! You have five seconds, and then their minds will start to drift. Be bold!

Before you record, you will need to script what you will say, the music you will use, or the sound effects. You'll need to make sure your radio ad script has the right tone, language, and personality to reach your particular audience. The script must connect with your target audience and not offend them. Use words that are easy to understand and pronounce. Use words they would use (layman's terms not big fancy hard to understand terms). The wrong tone or language can easily push people away from your message if you aren't careful. Define your audience, then use the ad to connect with them.

When reading your script, you want to speak at a normal pace. Too fast, the listener missing the points, too slow, the listener is bored. In addition, you need to make sure your voice is strong and loud enough to be heard. Soft voices that are hard to hear are not acceptable for radio ads. If you can't do it, you may need to hire a professional to do it for you and it can get very expensive.

As part of your script you need to include your business name (mentioned at least 3 times) along with your location, address, or website so customers can find you and purchase your products.

Finally, when writing your script, be sure to direct it at your customers. Don't say what I can do for you, say what the product does for you. Avoid I, and speak to the customer.

1. Determining the Ad's Length

Choose the right length for your ad. Radio ads are recorded and produced into 15, 30, or 60 second segments. When settling on a length for your ad, you must consider your budget, creative format, and the public's familiarity with your product or service. If you don't have any financial restrictions, you may find it helpful to write a variety 15, 30 and 60 second ads. As you write, read through your ad at a normal pace to make sure you fall within the intended time frame.

- If your product or service is well known and/or you have a limited budget, a 15 second ad may suffice.
- If your ad is in the form of a creative narrative, you may need 60 seconds tell your tale and sell the product or service.[\[1\]](#)

Keep 15 second ads simple. When writing a 15 second radio ad, you only have enough time to share basic information about the product or service. If your target audience is already aware of the product or service, this is an ideal and effective ad length. In this short window of time, you must mention the name of the business/event/individual, the product or service, its cost, and contact information.

- The word count of your short radio spot should be between 30 to 40 words.[\[2\]](#)

Captivate your audience with a 30 second radio ad. You may include more details in a 30 second ad than in a 15 second ad. This slightly extended time frame allows them to write in a more creative and compelling manner. You could write a dialogue, include testimonials, or even tell a short anecdote.

- Your 30-second ad should contain no more than 80 words.[\[3\]](#)

Be more thorough with a 60-second spot. The average radio ad lasts for 60 seconds. The one minute slot provides enough time for copywriters to make a complete sales pitch to the intended audience. The writer can grab the listener's attention, highlight a problem, provide an answer, and guarantee the customer or client's satisfaction.

- A 60 second slot is the ideal length for promoting new products and services.
- Your 60 second ad should not contain more than 160 words.[\[4\]](#)

2 Selecting a Style for your Ad

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Produce a “Straight Announcer” ad. This creative format centers around a sole strong voice. This single voice speaks to, not shouts at, the listener, sharing basic information about the service or product. The copy must match this simple format—it should be clear, direct, and focused. When executed properly, it should sound as though this single voice is talking directly to one person.

- In addition to sharing basic facts, this straight announcer may pose open ended questions, such as “Do you ever...?” or “Would you like to...?”
- This is a great creative format for 15 second ads.[\[5\]](#)

Sell the product or service with a dialog. People love to listen in on other’s conversations, or dialogs. In this creative format, one character has a problem, which the other character solves by recommending the product or service. The product or service’s benefits are relayed through thoughtfully placed questions and carefully worded answers.

- Problem: ”I have a date to the prom, but no suit!” Solution: “I rented my tux from _____. It was fast, easy, and inexpensive.”
- Problem: “My child gets so bored in the summer!” Solution: “I heard about this great fine arts camp near our house. They have sessions all summer long.”[\[6\]](#)

Grab your audience’s attention with a vignette. A vignette provides listeners a peek into another person’s life. This brief tale allows your listener to identify with the character. Once they see themselves in the add, the hope is that they will seek the same product or service as the individual highlighted in the vignette.[\[7\]](#)

- Open your ad with a short vignette dramatizing an individual’s specific problem—the goal is to have your listeners identify with the individual in the vignette.
 - "Oh, no! I've burnt the cake for Harry's birthday to a crisp! What will I do? His surprise party is tonight!"
- Once you have established the problem, cut away to an announcer. The announcer will contextualize the problem and offer a solution, i.e. the product or service being advertised. The announcer also provides all of the product or service details.
 - "Don't let a burnt cake spoil your next party. Surprise your guest of honor with a delicious cake from Manny's Bakery! At Manny's Bakery, we offer a variety of pre-decorated cakes baked fresh for every occasion."
- Time permitting, return to the character from the vignette. Provide a glimpse at how the announcer’s solution solved their problem.
 - Wow, honey, this cake is delicious!"
 - "Don't thank me, Harry, thank Manny's Bakery!"
- Conclude with a call to action from the announcer.
 - "Visit Manny's Bakery today!"

Include testimonials in your ad. Testimonials are reviews of the product or service given by real people. The power of the testimonial is not derived from clever copy but from the person actually providing the testimonial. Real people give the best possible endorsements—these testimonials are raw, honest, believable, and aspirational. There are several forms of testimonials:

- Interview random people on the street about a well-established product or service. Ask these individuals why they like the product or service and how it has impacted their daily life.
- Ask real people, celebrities, or experts to praise the product or service, while describing its use and benefits.[\[9\]](#)

3 Research the product or service. Before you can write effective, witty, and articulate copy, you need to learn the ins and outs of the service or product you are trying to sell. As you examine the product or service, try to answer to the following questions:

- What is the product used for?
- What does the service entail?
- Who manufactures the product?
- Which company or individual provides the service?
- What makes the product or service unique?
- How much does the product or service cost?
- Is the service or product only offered for a limited time?
- How do interested customers contact the seller or service provider?
- Where is the product sold?[\[14\]](#)

4 Create copy that is engaging and simple. Radio ads are frequently tuned out by listeners and extremely short. To compensate for these circumstances, copywriters must capture their audience's attention quickly and write short, precise, and clear copy that holds their listeners' attention. Achieving this delicate balance is tricky, but possible.

- Do not try to share every detail about the product or service in the copy.
- Keep your message simple and the focus on the product or service—don't let the copy get bogged down by an overworked creative format. The product or service should not be overshadowed by a vignette, dialog, or testimonial.
- Revise your copy with an editing eye. Consider every word, phrase, and sentence carefully. Could you shorten a sentence from 15 words to 6 words? Is that joke relevant? Is there a better word?[\[11\]](#)
- Remember that most people who are listening to radio advertisements are driving a car. When the music or show stops, they are apt to change the station. The copy must stop them from changing that station, or get through the other thoughts they have in their head while driving.

5 Provide your audience with a clear call to action. In addition to presenting the product or service in comprehensive and articulate manner, radio ads must also call its listeners to action. In other words, you must explicitly tell the intended audience what it is you want them to do. Call to actions may include telling your listeners to:

- Buy the product or try the service
- Go to a sale at a specific store
- Contact the manufacturer or business
- Attend a concert or club
- Watch a specific television show[\[12\]](#)

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Use sound effects wisely. Radio ads rely heavily on sound effects and music to help listeners visualize a scene. When incorporated into the copy correctly, sound effects and music can elevate and transform an ad. As you write the words of the radio ad, simultaneously envision the accompanying sound effects and music.

- Sound effects and music should never be an afterthought.
- You may also wish to include unusual voices in your ad.[\[13\]](#)
- For instance, if you are selling a beverage, hearing the bottle open can be enticing. If you are selling season tickets to a baseball team, the crack of the bat and roar of the crowd can grab someone's attention. Rely on these other elements to enhance your ad

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Script your Ad. Here are a few best practices to keep in mind when developing your ad copy.

- Start with an attention-grabbing statement. In radio, if you don't grab the listener's attention quickly, it's likely they will tune out, either literally or figuratively.
- Strike a balance between an emotional and logical appeal. A recitation of boring facts is unlikely to capture or keep a listener's attention, so try combining facts with emotion.
- Keep it simple and include a clear, relevant offer. A great ad that doesn't include an offer the audience is interested in probably won't get you the results you want.
- Your basic message should answer your listener's question, "What's in it for me?"