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NEWS

Public Radio 101

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What is Public Radio 101?



As the broadcast arm of Northern Illinois University, Northern Public Radio is concerned with helping students and members of the community develop professionally and advance their career skills. To that end, the WNII news team has developed the "Public Radio 101"

seminar conducted by professional journalists from the WNII news team during the academic semesters.

The first seminar was held in September 2016. Participants in this workshop are introduced to the principles and ethics of public radio, the basic practices of planning and gathering news stories, and recording and producing those stories for broadcast.



"Public Radio 101" graduates are invited to work with WNII News journalists and content creators on projects and stories during the remainder of the semester, with an eye on a future internship or broadcast opportunity. They use professional

equipment and receive professional guidance in preparing their work.

Our History

Northern Public Radio's history began in 1954, when WNIU signed on the air at 10 watts. Broadcasting only a few hours each day, programming included announcements of campus events, lectures and music.

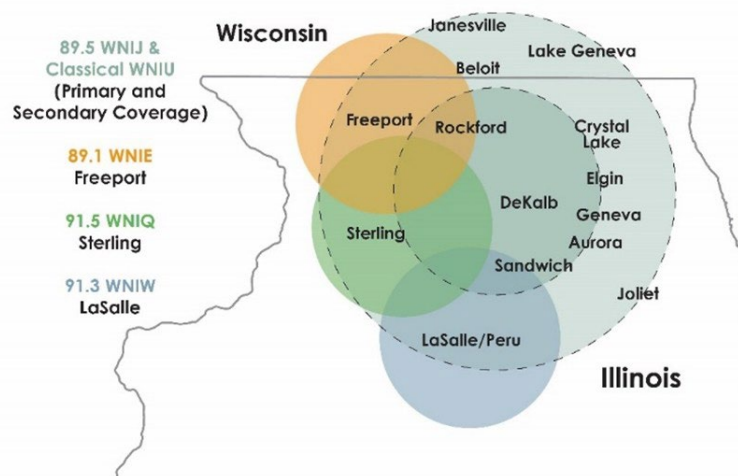
In 1971 WNIU became a charter member of National Public Radio, and a tradition of bringing the best in national and international news to northern Illinois began.

Northern Public Radio officially became a "network" in 1998, when WNIW in LaSalle (91.3-FM) and WNIQ in Sterling (91.5-FM) signed on the air. They were followed by WNIE in Freeport (89.1-FM) in 1999.

Mission Statement

The mission of Northern Public Radio is to enrich, inspire and inform adults in northern Illinois through programs and services that share ideas, encourage thought, give pleasure and create community.

Northern Public Radio Broadcast Area



Illinois News Broadcasters Association Code

We, the Members of the Illinois News Broadcasters Association, will uphold the following in our journalistic pursuits:

- to check the accuracy of the facts and report them objectively and impartially
- to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest, and to never allow personal beliefs or personal gain to influence coverage
- to mention race, creed, nationality, gender, disability, social status and sexual orientation of individuals only when relevant
- to show sensitivity to victims and witnesses of violent crimes and other personal tragedies
- to remember suspects are innocent until proven guilty
- to avoid interfering with emergency personnel in the performance of their duties
- to credit the source if the information is not one's own and never plagiarize
- to promptly correct all errors with special consideration given to audience and time
- to use secretive news gathering techniques only as a last resort, and to clearly identify and explain why such techniques were necessary to the story
- to avoid misleading use of images or sound, and to clearly identify staged or provided images or sound
- to clearly label all opinion and commentary
- to vigorously defend guarantees in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and in the Illinois Freedom of Information and Open Meetings Acts



Core Values for News/Information/Talk

Qualities of the Mind/Intellect

- Love of lifelong learning: A desire to learn something new every day
- Substance: Expand understanding of and connection with the world
- Curiosity: The need to dig deeper, to ask why, not just what
 - Credibility
 - Accuracy
 - Honesty: Listeners trust that we are non-manipulative, nonsensational
- Respect for the intelligence of the listener
- Purpose: A clear understanding of why we do what we do

Qualities of the Heart and Spirit

- Humor: Always has a purpose and is never mean-spirited
- Idealism: We believe in our power to find solutions
- Inspired about public life and culture
- Civility – Belief in Civil discourse
- Generosity: Content has center stage and the guest is the star

Qualities of Craft/Excellence in our use of the Medium

- Uniquely human voice: conversational, authentic, intimate
- Pacing: deliberate, thoughtful, appropriate to the substance of the content
- Attention to detail: music, sound elements, language

Successful programs can mix those qualities in a variety of ways, but all three categories must be present. It is the fusion of these three sets of core values that creates public radio's "signature" sound and the fundamental appeal of our programming to core listeners.

Source: Public Radio Program Directors Association

The NPR Accuracy Checklist

NPR REPORTERS, CORRESPONDENTS, PRODUCERS and MULTIMEDIA JOURNALISTS who collect and write the information we broadcast or post online will double-check:

- **SUPERLATIVES.** If something is said to be the "first," "last," "best," "worst," "only," "oldest," "youngest" etc., that claim must be verified. If it can't be, the claim should be deleted or qualified – and clearly attributed.
- **PERSONAL NAMES.** Verify them, spell them correctly (for radio and the Web) and confirm pronunciations.
- **AGES.** Get a person's date of birth and do the math.
- **TITLES.** President, CEO, professor, etc. They must be accurate.
- **NAMES of BUSINESSES, SCHOOLS and INSTITUTIONS.**
- **DAYS and DATES.** Are you sure this happened then?
- **HISTORICAL "FACTS."** Are you sure it happened that way?
- **LOCATIONS.** Is that where this happened? Is that where this person is from? Is that really the capital?
- **NUMBERS and CALCULATIONS.** Do the math yourself. Should it be millions, billions or trillions? Is the decimal in the correct place? Is it percent or percentage point?
- **QUOTES.** They must be attributed to the right person.
- **WEB ADDRESSES and PHONE NUMBERS.** They have to be tested.
- **GRAMMAR and SPELLING.** Note: What goes in a radio script may end up on the Web.

Source: Mark Memmott, NPR

Interviewing Techniques

Make sure your source knows you are going to record their comments.

Avoid asking questions that could yield one-word answers.

Questions that begin with “How” “What” and “Why” can get more in-depth answers.

Keep your questions short.

Avoid multi-part questions.

Don't interrupt a guest while they are answering.

Maintain eye contact.

Be an active listener.

If the guest gets too technical, ask for an example.

Don't make noise during their response. The microphone WILL pick up “Uh-huh” or “Right.”



Interviewing Techniques

If the guest dodges your question, ask it again. If they dodge it again, move on to the next question. Then return to the same question rephrased. After three opportunities, don't press any further. Leave pauses after responses. It may lead the guest to give a more in-depth answer.

Good Question!

Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How Why?

What happened?

Then what happened?

What did you see?

What went through your mind?

How did you feel?

Why did you care about that?

How would you respond to...?

Can you describe the scene?

What did it smell like?

What stands out the most?

Anything else?

Source: Poynter Institute, "Sound in the Story"

<https://bit.ly/2Tn4am9>

"What the world needs now is more questions and fewer answers.



This idea is as old as the Greek philosopher Socrates, who asked persistent questions to help people discover the flaws in their arguments. Questions are the currency of scientists, scholars, lawyers and journalists, like the ones I advise at NIU's student newspaper, the Northern Star.

As I tell my students, an interview is only as good as the questions you ask. And so it goes with civil discourse.

Social media comment sections are filled with answers aimed at telling the other commenters why they're wrong. The next time you are on social media, resist the urge to shoot down someone's argument and ask a question instead.

Here are some questions you can try out:

Can you give me an example?

Can you say more about that?

How does this affect you?

Why is this important to you?

And my personal favorite: How do you know that? This question is especially good at exposing views not based on fact. Sometimes the most important person to pose that question to is yourself.

Good questions pave the way for careful listening, another skill important to journalists. Your job is to understand what's being said. Thoughtful listening is a humbling experience. It's remembering that your views aren't important. This requires respect and kindness. It says "you matter."

The fact that we've lost the ability to talk to one another has become a tired complaint. How many of us bother to engage those with whom we disagree? How would we even begin to do so? I hope you try asking questions and really listening as an important first step.

I'm Shelley Hendricks, and that's my Perspective."

Microphone Placement



Microphone placement is crucial to ensure that you avoid the dreaded “plosive p’s.” Those are pops of sound that the microphone picks up when it is too close to the mouth or situated straight on and not at the correct tilt. Another tip is to have the microphone adjusted just above the mouth and not directly in front of it. You also do not need to have the mouth touching the windscreen! Give a few inches of space between the mouth and the microphone.



Physical

Hydrate! Avoid milk and sugar before recording.

Review your script, mark it up. If you stumble, it might be the writing.

Stand up straight. Lengthen and breathe from the diaphragm, not your chest.

Take your headphones off (unless you are on live).

Mic is fist-distance away from your mouth and angled slightly.

You are reading too quickly. A good read might feel painfully slow.

Enunciate! But don't overdo it.

Wave your hands and make faces!

Your Best Voice



Your Best Voice

Your best voice is natural.

Your best voice sounds like you.

Your best voice is calm and authoritative.

Your best voice matches the tone of your story.

Mental

You are telling a story, not announcing a story. Talk to one person, a person you know, like, and respect. Try to inform, not impress.

- Before you open your mouth, think to yourself "Now I will tell you a story. Hey, Jenna..." (or insert the name of the person you imagine you are talking to.)

You are speaking to someone who is six feet away. Closer = too intimate. Further = shouting, which distorts your tone.

Deliver thoughts, not words. Think about what you are saying and it will flow as an idea instead of random words.

Interview for Two

Questions:

1. Can you please say and spell your name?
2. How did you get your name. What does it mean?
3. Finish this sentence, "I am passionate about_____." 4. What is something that most people don't know about you?
5. What is your superpower?
6. Anything else you'd like to add?

Vocal Delivery

(TIMES NEW ROMAN, SIZE 18)

With early voting now open to Illinois voters, the state attorney general's office has started election monitoring across the state. The Illinois Attorney General's office maintains a longstanding practice of monitoring state elections to protect voter rights and accessibility to polling places. Attorney General Kwame Raoul is urging voters to call his office if they encounter suspicious activity, or improper practices that may be illegal. Separate hotlines have been set up for callers in northern and southern Illinois. // Raoul is also urging Illinoisians to plan whether they intend to vote by mail, cast their vote early or vote on Election Day.

Tips for Gathering Sound



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Get great sound!
Field production tips

npr.org/training
@nprtraining

- **Anticipate the sounds you'll hear.**
- In the field, **deconstruct the sound of the scene** and record the elements.
- **Avoid clichés** when using scene sound.
- **Look for and record movement.**
- **Find transitional sound** — something that changes.
- **Avoid music in the background** at all costs.
- **Always wear your headphones. Really.**
- **Get close, stay close.**
- **Patience is key!**
- **If you can loop ambience, it's probably boring.**
- **Omnidirectional mics** handle wind noise and p-pops well, but need to be held close to the action.
- **Shotgun mics** are prone to mic-handling noise, p-pops and wind buffeting — but focus well.
- A **high-pass filter** can sometimes help with p-pops, wind and handling noise.
- **Use wind protection** or a popper stopper.
- Record 1.5 min of room tone/ambi **with the mic in the same position as the interview.**
- **Check the recording before you leave the location!** Do you have what you need?

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Field Recording Checklist

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Equipment

- ☐ Fresh batteries
- ☐ Spare batteries (charged)
- ☐ Mic + battery
- ☐ Mic cable
- ☐ Wind protection
- ☐ Pistol grip
- ☐ Headphones + adapter
- ☐ Recorder
- ☐ Backup recorder
- ☐ Formatted memory card + spare (both formatted on recorder)
- ☐ Mic clamp
- ☐ Ground lift
- ☐ Line to mic pad

Misc

- ☐ List of anticipated sounds
- ☐ Phone (charged)
- ☐ Phone charger
- ☐ Phone battery pack (charged)
- ☐ Press pass
- ☐ Business cards
- ☐ Pen/pencil
- ☐ Notepad
- ☐ Rain gear/hat/gloves
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Snack
- ☐ \$ for parking + transportation

Recording

- ☐ Remove distractions! (hums, buzzes, TV, fridge, AC, music?)
- ☐ 90 seconds interview ambience (same level and position)
- ☐ Transition into scene
- ☐ Scene element 1
- ☐ Scene element 2
- ☐ Scene element 3
- ☐ Transition out of scene
- ☐ "Wide shot" perspective ambience
- ☐ Closer perspective ambience

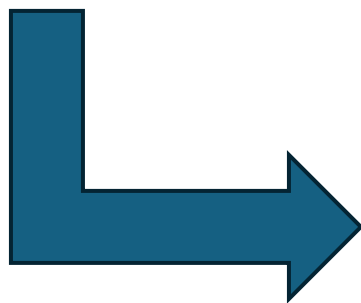
Source: NPR

The Ten Commandments of Recording

1. Thou shalt always get a minute of ambience.
2. Thou shalt keep the same mic placement when recording room tone.
3. Thou shalt not walk on the end of sound bites.
4. Thou shalt always wear your headphones and keep them holy.
5. Thou shalt shun the evil hums: fluorescents, computers, fridges.
6. Thou shalt not interview people with music playing in the background.
7. Thou shalt always have the person say their name for proper pronunciation.
8. Thou shalt check thy tape before thy departure from the scene.
9. Thou shalt mic closely.
10. Thou shalt get another minute of ambience ... just in case.

Source: Alison MacAdam, 2015. This guidance comes from an NPR seminar by Robert Smith and Jeff Rogers in March 2002. It is just as relevant today. Many of the ideas and advice were provided by Terry Fitzpatrick, Howard Berkes, Jonathan Kern, Sora Newman, and the APRN Focus News Workshop.

SCAN HERE for more great tips!



Guidelines for WNIJ News Stories

For newscasts, we like to have two versions of each story, plus a web posting. This is because we alternate versions during different hours of the programs. It is preferred to have a wrap version and a cut and copy version.

- If you are covering an event in-person, take pictures! (Be sure to get correct spellings of names and titles for the captions)

Reader: A story that is read by the anchor. It does NOT include soundbites

Example: Anchor: DeKalb County health officials continue to track West Nile Virus. The health department regularly tests birds and mosquitos for the virus. A bird in Genoa (jen-OH-uh) recently tested positive for West Nile. Landowners are encouraged to report suspicious birds to the health department.

Voicer: A story that includes a lede for the anchor to read. The reporter reads the entire story, and it does not include soundbites. Typically, around 40-45 seconds. It is used when a source does not want to be recorded but has information to offer.

Example: Anchor: DeKalb County officials continue to track West Nile Virus. WNIJ's Jane Doe has more on those efforts:

0813WNVV (:40...SOC)

Reporter: The county currently has four mosquito traps that are monitored weekly. A recent batch near Genoa tested positive for West Nile Virus. Ray Dio is the Director of Health Protection. He says mosquitos that transmit West Nile Virus prefer hot and dry days. They love stagnant water, and their parting gift can leave you feeling pretty woozy, but is rarely fatal. The department depends on landowners to report dead birds who may have been exposed to West Nile. One found in DeKalb recently tested positive for the virus.

Spot (also known as a Wrap)

Anchor: DeKalb County officials continue to track West Nile Virus. WNIJ's Jane Doe has more on those efforts:

0813WNVW (:45...SOC)

Reporter: The county currently has four mosquito traps that are monitored weekly. A recent batch near Genoa tested positive for West Nile Virus. Ray Dio is the Director of Health Protection. He says mosquitos that transmit West Nile Virus prefer hot and dry days. They love stagnant water, and their parting gift can leave you feeling pretty woozy, but is rarely fatal.

"We know it's here, it is going to be here, it is just a matter of taking normal precautions that you would against any mosquito or insect bite."

The department depends on landowners to report dead birds who may have been exposed to West Nile. I'm Jane Doe."

Cut and Copy

Anchor: Illinois health officials have reported dozens of cases of Zika virus statewide. A different type of mosquito spreads Zika, which can cause birth defects. At this point, Zika has been spread by traveling to countries where the virus is most prevalent. Ray Dio is the Director of Health Protection. He says, for now, local officials are trying to learn as much as they can.

0813WNVCC ":15...different ways that it is transmitted, which has more ways to transmit than West Nile. Those are things that we are definitely keeping track of and then based off of that, trying to prepare plans on how we can address Zika in the communities should it become established in a mosquito population in the area."

Anchor: The county currently tests mosquito batches for West Nile Virus, but Dio says they aren't yet testing them for Zika.

Effective August 13, 2018

