MyEU5

Tips for Creating Your Third Level Entry

Tips for Recording a Podcast Entry

Use the best equipment and tools you possibly can

- Podcasts can be recorded with your laptop's microphone but its better with an external microphone or a headset. The software Audacity is recommended for recording and editing audio. StreamYard is an option where individual person's audio can be recorded separately. This not an exhaustive list of potential software.

Don't forget to warm up

- Warm up by practicing your script or discussing your running order. It can improve your dictation and keep you from stumbling. You can record your intro and outro segments separately if you want to get stuck into the main content right away.
- Make a test recording before you officially start your piece and listen back to everything you record. When you playback the audio files, follow your instincts when something sounds off.
- If there's a problem with either microphone, identify and resolve it before starting.

Record in a small, quiet room

- Record in the small and quiet room to reduce outside noise and echoes. Shut windows and doors, turn off any machines or devices that make noise, and keep distractions like pets away. Fill the recording space with soft items (couches, pillows, carpet, etc.) to absorb sounds and muffle errant noises. If in a noisy space, a way to eliminate background noise is to drape a blanket over you and the microphone.
- Moving creates background noise, particularly if you use earbud and wire headphones. Try to stay still in and avoided waving your hands near the microphone. Move notes around as silently as possible and don't click your pen!

Create a brief noise profile

- Pause for four or five seconds at the beginning of your recording to create a noise profile. Stay absolutely silent and eliminate all environmental noise. Use this moment of silence during editing to identify and remove any background noise on Audacity.

Adopt proper microphone techniques

- The microphone should be at the same height as your mouth. Adjust your body so that your mouth's distance from the microphone setup gives the desired volume level. The closer you are the microphone, the louder your voice will sound. Most software will display your levels on a green, yellow, to red scale. Aim to stay in the green for conversational tone and yellow to add emphasis. Stay out of the red or your sound will be distorted. Volume levels can be edited in post-production, reduce your editing by keeping your mouth the same distance from the microphone.

Leave audio cues for mistakes

- Mistakes happen and it's OK! Slicing out mistakes is basic podcast editing, but you need to give yourself a cue to find them in the track.

Stay quiet while your guests speak

- It's tempting use simple phrases like "yes" and "right" and "okay" while your guests speak. This might distract your listeners. Save editing work by muting your microphone when a co-host or guest is speaking. This way you won't pick up their voice in your microphone and its less noise that you'll have to remove later.

Use copyright free music

- Podcast entries will be shared publicly meaning any music needs to be copyright appropriate. Search Uppbeat's catalogue of copyright-free music or view their playlists inspired by the types of podcasts and video. Uppbeat give a unique credit when you download a track to add to your audio description, allowing you to avoid copyright claims.
- If you want to use copyrighted music, you need approval from the original creator. It doesn't matter if it's a short clip, 10 or 30 seconds, you still need permission.

Use production elements sparingly

- Sound effects have their place. They can add life and uniqueness to your show. But they can also distract and cheapen used them too often. Use sound effects only when the content calls for it and stick to effects that match your content.

Don't be afraid to take a break

- Try breaking it into segments so with places for breaks it gives you an opportunity to check the audio for issues, grab water, and take a breath. You can review notes, plan your conversation, rehearse and catch up with your co-host or guest on what's next.

Maximize your internet bandwidth

- If you're conducting an interview or conversation over the internet, it's vital that you've the strongest connection possible. This will improve the quality of the audio. Run a speed test if you can (above 25 Mbps is considered a good connection). If possible plug your device directly into the internet router.

Don't forget about the content!

- The most professional sounding recording means nothing if it doesn't contain engaging content. Make sure you have done plenty of preparation and know what kind of discussion or debate you want to have. Spend time on understanding what makes a podcast interesting in addition working on your recording technique.

What file to send us your podcast in

- Submissions can be for the MyEU50 competition as an audio file, mp3 only, or if you publish your podcast on your own channels, ie Spotify, YouTube etc., you can send a direct link to that episode as your entry.

Tips for Writing an Op-Ed or Newspaper Opinion Piece Entry

Write for a specific audience

- Which news outlet or type of news outlet are you writing for? Think about who is their general audience, what it is they care about and then ask, will this piece interest them?

A strong introduction

- The first line of an op-ed is crucial. Op-eds should begin with a strong introductory statement that captures the reader's interest and lays the groundwork for the overall piece's argument. Why should the reader care about what it is you are saying?

Do your research

- Successful op-eds must be grounded in research. Effective op-eds cite evidence – facts, quotations or data - to prove your point and mention people or events in your examples. Accuracy is as important in opinion pieces as in news reporting.

Have a strong opinion

- Your main thesis is the most important part of an op-ed. It needs a clearly defined point of view, backed by evidence, in the pursuit of a convincing argument.

Your voice

- Having a strong tone of voice is critical to a successful op-ed piece. Op-eds are generally conversational in tone – a good tip is to imagine you are speaking to your reader, does the piece follow the same tone of voice throughout?

Every word counts

- Op-eds should be no longer than 800 words. Clarify your three main goals for the piece prior to drafting, this will help you clarify your thoughts.

A strong closing

- Your closing should offer solutions to the problem, repeat your main points, and remind readers of the issue's relevance.

Tips for Writing a Speech Entry

Have a core argument or point to make

- Think about the central point you want to get across and make it early. Set out your stall and maybe preview what the audience can expect in the speech.

Have an audience in mind

- Consider why the point(s) you are making are relevant to the audience It might also be useful to tell the audience why the speech is relevant to them.

Be memorable

- A long list of facts and figures may demonstrate your central point, but your audience is likely to stop listening. Engage them with stories, anecdotes and interesting or new points of information. Keep statistics to a minimum.

Be personal

- Consider why the point(s) you are making are relevant to the audience It might also be useful to tell the audience why the speech is relevant to them.

Use alliteration and repetition

- Alliteration and repetition can give rhythm and catch attention. Use sparingly for the best effect.

Differ between long and short sentences

- The alternation between long and short sentences can also be effective. A short sentence after a few longer ones can help grab the audience's attention at intervals throughout the speech.

Watch the tone

- Try to strike a balance between authoritative and personable. The trick is to be knowledgeable without being patronising.

Recognise how far along in your speech you are

- Inform your audience of how far along you are with the points in your speech: “To my second of three points today... And to conclude...”

End on a high

- The final few sentences are usually a call to action, reinforcing your core argument or leaving the audience with questions to consider. It is worth spending time on these few sentences to ensure they have an impact.

Stick to time or word count

- Know how much time you have a stick to time or word count.

Read it out loud

- This is the only way to know if a speech works or not. Words that work on a page may not work when they are spoken.

Finally, keep in mind Barack Obama's mantra – there is no persuasion without inspiration.

Tips for Designing a Poster Entry

Decide the Purpose of the Poster, the Audience and the Next Steps

- Decide a clear message before starting to design it. Create a design that appeals to your preferred audience and consider how its dissemination affects how you view it.
- Communicate the next steps for the audience. Consider using links, QR codes or hashtags to prompt the next steps.

Pick a structure to your poster

- Key elements to a poster's structure is size, placement and hierarchy. Most posters have three sections of hierarchy: Headline, details, and other information at the bottom. This isn't a prescriptive structure just ensure their is a clear flow.

Ensure your poster is legible

- Using multiple fonts can assist the audience in clearly reading the content in the right order and with the overall design. Keep it simple don't use more than three.
- Have a contrast between the fonts, images, and background making the text clearer.
- Will the device they view it on mean your audience will need to zoom in?

Does your theme or topic have branding colours or fonts

- Research the topic and consider branding of similar campaigns. Match the colours, imagery, and font if you want consistency or contrast to stand out.

The information needs to be clear, concise, and correct.

- The writing on the poster should be easy to understand. There shouldn't be paragraphs of text just enough to encourage your people to find out more.
- Research your topic and find credible sources before adding it to your poster.

Leaving space in the poster

- Space between words and letters, pr lines of text, margins, design elements, and illustrations help to make key elements stand out.
- Remove unnecessary information or design elements so it doesn't look cluttered but rather a clean and simple design.

Think visually interesting

- Pick a large image or graphic to grab your audience's attention. Consider image's colours does it matched the font or other design elements, should it by monotone.
- Make sure that you have permission to use the image in the competition.
- Juxtapositions with elements, colours and fonts can help the content of your poster stand out and provide useful contrast.

Use a template if you are unsure where to start.

- There are loads of software out there that you can use including but not limited to PowerPoint, Canva or Adobe.

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