

2013 NY Press Club Foundation Conference on Journalism

Multimedia- Tips for Reporting with your SmartPhone

The act of reporting on-video is physical.. intellectual.. and intimate.

Your Voice

Your diaphragm/stomach pumps out air from your lungs. The pitch of your voice is created by the vocal cords in your neck.. and your words are shaped by your mouth and tongue. The sound of your voice largely comes from the resonance in your torso. The more relaxed you are in your jaw.. shoulders.. and neck- the easier your voice will flow out.

We speak on phonated, articulated air that exits our bodies through our mouth. Think of the word 'shop'. Feel the /sh/ .. hear the /ah/ that comes from a relaxed open jaw and lowered tongue. That feeling of these first 2 initial sounds should give you a good sense of the voice you'll be using when you're speaking on-camera.

If you need to 'project' your voice out a little more.. or if circumstances dictate that you speak a bit louder- remember that this fuller sound comes from your stomach- and not your neck or mouth.

Speaking

Your spoken words are invisible and ephemeral.

In the English language: each time a speaker 'lands'.. or finishes a sentence.. listeners subliminally react. It's analogous to feeding a baby with a tiny spoon: they take the food.. swallow.. and open up for more.

There is no need to speak any differently than you do all day long. If your personal speaking style or dialect detract from easy comprehension- someone will advise you of this- and simple adjustments can be made.

Your Sentences

In spoken journalism: the more you keep your syntax simple and declarative- the more you'll be in control of what you're saying.. and the easier you'll be to follow. Eg. adding a mid-sentence explanatory phrase or sidebar.. or starting with a gerund derails our ease of listening. Instead: write your information in a series of short, declarative sentences. In 'oral journalism' you can start sentences with And or But.

Using Lede Lines

Note: a 'lede line' is a lead (rhymes with seed) line

In spoken journalism the lede comes first. Then detail your information with roughly 2 to 3 more follow-up sentences. Each lede accompanied by its sentences becomes a nugget. The

nugget method works for stand-ups and for being interviewed about a blog, a story you've written.. or about a beat you're familiar with.

Reporting On-Camera: Keeping it Clear and Simple

The key to making all of your information as clear and easy to follow as possible is to see your content as a string nuggets - with each nugget introduced by a new lede line. You are essentially flagging successive points re. one topic.. or new topics. You are keeping listeners engaged.. and you're giving yourself an easy system to use when organizing and presenting your news.

Breaking News

Your best reporting will be a list of simple sentences that state what you know..what you see.. what you hear.. or what you're experiencing. Each statement is important. There are no lede lines. It is much easier than most people think! And yes- feel free to use notes.

'Voice-Over' on Video

The same skills of voice, speaking and use of simple syntax apply here. There is no need to add extra drama or to 'punch' words. You are the same person whom we know- or would like to know. We just can't see you. Relax and speak with a full voice. Be aware of the semantic underpinning of your statements.. and [hook into chunks of information]- and not isolated words. Be on the watch for onomatopoeia opportunities.. and go for it! If you don't have the time or opportunity to 'track' your report- you can use captions. Write with the same simple syntax. Sentences should be brief- and ideally appear on blank, inserted 'slates'.

Natural Sound

Some stories can be told solely by the video you shoot. In many cases it's all about the 'nat sound' that accompanies your video. It's also largely about the 'SOT's'. This stands for Sound on Tape. The phrase represents the 'soundbites' that you may have landed or collected. You will set up the SOT with your speaking or writing. In the ideal universe- you can also 'write out' of the SOT- ie. referring to the content as you continue with more information.

Mindset and Body Language

Remember that you are really having an intimate 1:1 conversation with us. You are sharing information with someone you can't see. When you speak into the lens we sense that you're speaking only to us.

Repress nothing! Your manner of speaking.. your facial expressions.. and your body language are unique. They are a personal and important semantic interpretation of your information. Trust your unique communication style: some of us are 'still speakers'.. others have an unbridled way of speaking. In playback: If you see your natural style as being a distraction- then work on eradicating or 'shrinking' one or 2 elements.

Added behaviors such as forcing a smile or speaking in a more formal or histrionic manner are not necessary and only serve to make you look self-conscious or cheesy.

Your Phone

Consider purchasing a lavalier microphone

Consider 2 lavs for cleaner sound. You'd use the lightning adaptor on the bottom of your phone.

For an "off the shelf ready to go" version: My go-to guys, Professional Sound Services, recommend the smartLav by Rode

There are now boom poles for iPhones!

Shooting Video

Speaking direct to camera: Once you go beyond about 15 seconds we get tired of you.

Shoot relatively tight- from the torso up- unless you're showing us something.

Think about 'covering' your narration with b-roll (video images) that reflect your topic

Always use a tripod

Avoid zooming (going wide to tight or tight to wide) and panning (moving from side to side)

Use a lavalier mic or a boom mic when possible. The mic should be positioned at the source

Is Makeup Necessary?

Ideally, you want to avoid a shiny face

A last-minute blotting with several squares of toilet paper works great

Sheer cornsilk powder applied with a brush or anti-shine lotion that dries clear work well on any skin color. There are also many over the counter traditional makeups that work. Your best bet is to ask a TV reporter.

Lastly- a Word about Dialects

The word 'dialect' often comes up in my work. Some journalists' speaking patterns belie the fact that their first and only language has not been US English. If the sound of your voice has a gentle hint of something different going on- and it doesn't interfere with comprehension- it shouldn't be an issue. However if vowel differences make us subliminally second-guess words.. if some consonants are produced differently.. or if the cadences of sentences confound the content- then considering a little 'dialect work' may be worthwhile. Two Warnings: 1- It involves patience and practice.. and 2- Do not expect to 'rid' yourself of your dialect. This is not realistic. After all- the digital world is one world.