

Best Practices for Radio:

1. Before you start recording a radio spot, spend as much time as possible writing what you'd like to get across... first, ask yourself who your audience is (your peers) and what's the message you're trying to convey (be careful on the road, don't text or use handheld devices that could distract you while driving). You can have all of the tech skills in the world - mixing sounds and creating amazing effects - but if the message is lost then what's the purpose?
2. While writing down your ideas (copy), brainstorm with friends – bounce ideas off of them and ask for their advice on any current event or pop culture tie-in that would resonate with your age group. One of the amazing things about working solely with audio is that you truly have the whole world at your disposal; there are no limitations on what picture you can paint with sounds --- don't lose sight of that and make sure to maximize that potential!
3. Remember to speak clearly and loudly enough for everyone to hear. Practice recording your spot so that you nail the delivery.
4. Pacing is important. Sometimes pauses and silence stand out as much as sound.
5. The quality of the announcer will reflect the quality of the spot. This doesn't mean your announcer needs to be typical – just someone who can capture attention. And it could be a kid, an animal, someone who represents an occupation, a monster!
6. Make it relatable! When writing, make sure you're not talking *AT* the listener... people are spoken to that way all day long. When they're listening to the radio they're usually hoping for some type of an escape from that. Keep that thought top of mind. Talk *TO* your listener. Capture them.
7. Practice your script before you record it... if there's more than just one person speaking, gather the people who'll be voicing it with you and do a quick run through (like rehearsing the parts in a play). Hearing all the parts in context before you record can save you a ton of time with revisions. TV show casts do run-throughs before they ever hit the soundstage to record. Pattern your recording off what the pros do.
8. This is somewhat of a call back to an earlier point but it's important enough to keep mentioning. When you're ready to record your radio spot, remember that getting your message across is priority number one -- and really, two, three, four and so on. Think back to some of the radio commercials you remember and why you remember them. One example is the Motel 6 spots with the guy who would "*leave the light on for ya'.*" ([Here's](#) a link to Motel 6 radio.) These spots aren't fancy nor a huge production – they use simple music bed with folksy words, but what made them work is that they **STOOD** out for that very reason. When you're listening to commercials they all tend to sound

the same but when that noise in the background is interrupted with something different - you tune back in, mentally - and actually listen to what's being played. Remember this when creating your spot; it can be very simple but try to make it different, clear and capture attention.

9. Variety - no one likes to hear something they perceive as being monotonous or boring... we used the Motel 6 example earlier as something that worked on a simple level because it interrupted the repetitive noise that surrounded it. You can also accomplish that within your own spot. Perhaps switching the music you're using in the background (and not just at a random point in the piece). Have your changes where it makes sense: a new thought, a new direction, use other sounds underneath the bed and voice-over to accentuate points that need to stand out. Think of an action scene in a movie and how music is used to intensify it; you're able to do the exact same thing in audio production, sometimes to an even greater effect, as it's only limited by the mind of the person who's hearing it.
10. Finally - be open to all criticism and play your finished piece for anyone who'll agree to listen. Take their thoughts, critiques, suggestions (and sometimes) compliments to heart... This is your audience --- and not one of them will be "wrong" --- each person will hear and receive your commercial or promo differently and all of their points will be valid. Even if they LOVE it - ask what you could do differently to make them love it more -- ask specific questions - "is the music too slow" -- "is the read too slow or fast?" -- "what can I do to REALLY punch this part of the message home?" After you've got your answers, record again and make the changes you think it may need. In the end, you're the one who's created it, and hopefully if you take some of these pointers to heart and trust your own instincts as a producer AND a listener you'll have a winning spot.