

# Writing for Talking

## Copywriting tips on behalf of the speakers who are voicing your scripts.

Readers read with their eyes. Speakers use tongues and lungs. Here are some tips for writing scripts or copy for those who talk and read out loud, whether you call them a voiceover artist, VO, talent, narrator or guest speaker.

### **1. Word count is your friend for timing a script.**

The average pace for narrating is 2.5 words per second, or 150 words per minute.

### **2. Format the copy for smooth reading.**

Double space. Use an 11- or 12-point font that's easy to read. Make sure the end of a sentence or section is on the same page or screen, to avoid pausing.

### **3. Spell for pronunciation.**

If you type "NYC" the talent will read those three letters. If you want it pronounced "New York City," type it that way. How do you want "Aug. 15-20" to be pronounced? August 15th through the 20th, August 15 to 20, August 15th to the 20th. If it matters to you, type it the way you want it spoken. Use ALL CAPS for emphasis. Use ellipses . . . or dashes — for pauses.

### **4. Go clause-less.**

Run-on sentences are hard to read aloud when there's no place to take a breath. Parenthetical phrases and clauses make the audience work harder.

### **5. Practice out loud.**

Some words are just tricky to say, so try to avoid back-to-back sounds ("the brightest star"). If the audience isn't reading along, they are depending on aural comprehension. To make sure they understand what the VO is saying, close your eyes and listen as someone else reads what you wrote. Put yourself in the ears of the audience.

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