

Using a Microphone

The usual reaction to hearing your voice played back is "ugh! Is that really what I sound like?" so, it's important to get used to that and accept it. Trying to fight it can lead to all sorts of attempts at sounding different. This may result in a false persona, which the listener will spot straight away.

Good results at the microphone are not likely to happen instantly. Sitting in a small room with bits of printed paper and talking to an object on a stand is not a natural means of human communication. You can grow into it in time, but don't expect too much too soon.

Wearing headphones and hearing yourself through them as you record can be difficult to get used to. If your TN requires you to do this, spend some time practising and finding what level suits you best. What you're hearing in the "cans" will affect what you're delivering.

Become your own critic. Listen to what you've recorded and assess how well you've told the story. Don't beat yourself over the head if you make a mistake... that's no crime and the way you react *after* the mistake is far more important than how you continue with the rest of the piece.

You may not be able to spend much time studying the stories you're about to read before you record, but any advance preparation you can make will help a lot, even if it is only to get a quick impression of the piece and check if there are any specific pitfalls... difficult names or bizarre journalistic grammar. Lifting words from the printed page and making them sound like attractive spoken English is no easy task, especially as newspaper writing is often peppered with "journalese" clichés!

Remember that the microphone also picks up vibrations from the table or floor stand it is mounted on. Therefore, if you bump a floorstand with your foot or hit a table when the mic is placed on it, you will probably produce a deep bass "thump" on your recording. A similar rule applies to rustling papers... the microphone will make much more of these sounds than they appear to you at the time. Before you begin a reading session, try to have the articles you'll be concentrating on in order so that you don't need to resort to noisy searches in the middle of the recording.

Don't be afraid to experiment with the microphone. Standard instructions about how far to sit from it and so forth should be taken as rough guidelines to get you started, not rigid rules.