

AUDIO SCRIPT

Exercise 1:

Hello, and thank you for coming. I'm going to be looking at my life as a current affairs researcher. It may surprise you to know that it wasn't my first choice of career; indeed, one could argue that it wasn't a choice at all – but I'll go into that later.

Right, let's start with what led me to where I am today. I had intended to become an author and, after graduating, spent some considerable time attempting to write my first novel. However, after several failed attempts, I found myself working for the local newspaper as a junior television journalist. I did this for a few years and then, quite by chance, I was offered the opportunity to become involved in a high-profile TV documentary. Well, it was a life-changing experience. We were working in a very remote area, and I was tasked with not only finding potential interviewees, but also persuading them to take part in the programme. From that point, there was no going back and my new career as a current affairs researcher was established.

OK, so now let's move on to some of the key benefits. Of course, I get the chance to travel extensively, and this is something that can be extremely rewarding. Secondly, in terms of personal development, I get a real sense of achievement from going beyond the obvious and bringing something new and thought-provoking to the viewers.

Now, let's take a look at some of the key drawbacks. Firstly, don't expect to work nine to five. The hours can be painfully long and this really isn't the right career for anyone who is unable to cope with tight deadlines. Typically, these are immovable, so meeting them can be stressful. Secondly, you may find that you are away from home for long periods of time, so relationships with friends and family can suffer as a result.

OK, so I hope you're clearer on some of the advantages and disadvantages of a career as a current affairs researcher. To sum up, whilst it's an extremely challenging and pressurized job, for those who are prepared to work hard, the rewards are incredible.

Exercise 2:

Hello, I'm here today to talk to you about the process of writing an effective media or press release. My talk will be split into what I consider are the four key stages involved in the process.

OK, so let's start with the headline. Not only should this be brief, clear and to the point, but it also needs to grab the reader's attention. Whilst the first word in the press release could be, and often is, capitalised, the rest of the text should be in lower case. Typically, you should treat your headline as an announcement by extracting the main points from the remainder of the release.

Right, so moving on to the first main paragraph in the body of the article. First and foremost, avoid fancy language. Overlong vocabulary will simply confuse the reader. And you must be careful of repetition – you don't have the time or the space for this. In addition, I would suggest you do not use complicated grammatical structures. Remember: the purpose here is to generate interest, and, therefore, we're looking for a summary of everything you want to say, written in a very straightforward way.

Now, turning to the remaining paragraphs, ensure they are written in the order you want them to be seen in the release. Obviously, this means from the most to the least important. It's critical that the paragraphs are compact – unlike essay writing, which uses complex structures, sentences here are short and uncomplicated.

OK, so we've talked about the first three elements. Now let's look at 'Company information', which is where you let journalists know who you are. Clearly, you need to describe what you do and such like, and this should be done in a few lines. At this stage, link to your web page and other useful information that you'd like to have quoted in the release.

Finally, you should tie everything together by providing links to any additional supporting materials, and, of course, details of how you can be reached for further comment.

Well, I think that just about clarifies the main elements of writing an effective release. Now, any questions?

Exercise 4:

Hello. As you know, I've come here today to talk to you about a specific role within the media, but before I do that, I'd like to talk about some of the challenges you'll face. I know many of you think it's a glamorous life, full of celebrities and parties. But, whilst it can be exciting in the extreme, the reality is often full of difficult personal choices and sheer hard work.

OK, so firstly, be prepared for criticism from those you know – and don't know. What I mean by this is you'll become unpopular. Many surveys suggest that the public just don't have faith in those who work in the media. You may be shocked to find, for example, conversations with acquaintances stop dead as soon as you reveal what you do for a living. And even friends and family are likely to become reluctant to share their secrets with you. Why? For fear you'll pass them on to whomever will pay the most for them.

Secondly, you'll need to give up a lot. Salaries are low and working hours long. The tasks you undertake can be tedious, with vast amounts of time spent on checking research and sources. Only the fortunate few actually become household names, so unless you're at the top, it's likely you'll feel underpaid and overworked – not to mention undervalued.

Next, competition is stiff. As the industry becomes more popular and technology develops, the number of people seeking entry into the field increases. This means, more than ever before, you need to stand out from the crowd, both in terms of personality and experience. For the latter, you'll need to use social media to build up your personal brand and get noticed.

OK, so they're the challenges. Now, let's turn to something more specific.

Exercise 5:

OK, so we've looked at some of the challenges of working in the media and I now want to turn my attention to a different role: that of a weather forecaster. Although we think of weather forecasters as broadcasters, there is an awful lot that goes on behind our TV screens, as I'll explain now.

OK, so let's start with what a meteorologist does. Well, put simply, they collect and study data in order to predict the weather. That sounds easy, but it is in fact exceedingly complex.

So, let's start with data collection or observations. These are a vital part of the process, and over 500,000 observations are received daily. These record atmospheric conditions around the world and arrive by satellite continuously throughout a 24-hour period. They include humidity, wind speed and temperature.

Next comes the assimilation of the data. This helps fill in the gaps that are not provided by observations. Obviously, very remote areas cannot easily be reached – for example, large parts of the ocean – and therefore, without adding the process of a best guess, weather predictions just wouldn't be possible. These are adjusted as additional data is assimilated.

Thereafter comes numerical data modelling. Weather models are usually generated on a three-dimensional grid using a super-computer. The calculations take a matter of seconds, but, as I'm sure you can imagine, it's a highly mathematical process using vast amounts of data, and one which is being fine-tuned all the time by teams of scientists.

The final stage – collaboration – is where meteorologists meet to make decisions about the data. This helps iron out any differences in opinion, which are often based on experience, and is particularly useful for challenging forecasts that are ambiguous – that is, they may be interpreted slightly differently. For example, how many inches of snow or rain will fall at a certain time of day? Sometimes, when full agreement can't be reached, there may be compromise. This sharing of expertise often leads to more accurate forecasting.