

Got Something To Say?

How to write a Community Service Announcement for Radio

Attract attention to your activities!

Stimulate interest in your organisation!

Get a response!



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WHAT IS A COMMUNITY SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT?

Community organisations have something they want to say. Community radio stations want to help you by broadcasting Community Service Announcements (CSA's).

CSA's are short announcements to help non-profit, non-commercial community groups in your area. CSA's promote the activities of your organisation, give information about specific events or request help you're your community.

CSA's are usually read by radio announcers. Sometimes, however, the radio station may consider producing a recorded announcement with music for special occasions — such as to announce a Carols by Candlelight celebration, or a Doorknock Appeal. Talk to the Programme Manager if you think a recorded announcement is more suitable for your needs.

WRITE A CSA IN 8 STEPS

1. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Listen to the radio station. Are the people you want to reach likely to be listening? The Programme Manager will ask, "Is **our** radio **their** radio station?"

2. DECIDE WHO WILL DO THE WORK

Who will give full attention to this very important task of Community Relations? Who will be responsible for getting the CSA's written and sent to the radio station? Who is creative? Who is dependable and who can get things done on time? Who has the authority of the organisation to be the contact person for listeners or the radio station staff? Who can be easily contacted?

3. GET SOME IDEAS

Listen to other CSA's on the radio station. Read aloud the four examples of CSA's we've provided for you.

4. DEVELOP THE FIRST DRAFT

Use these guidelines to design a first draft. Notice that the four CSA examples have the following principles to use the radio medium effectively.

- ❖ Short sentences. Not longer than 20-25 words.
- ❖ Uncomplicated sentences. William F Strunk, a famous radio writer, says the most important principle for writing for radio is: "Omit needless words."
- ❖ Clear and simple sentences. We can understand what the writer means. Pity the audience who heard someone say this: "I know

you believe you understand what you think I said. However, I'm not sure you realise that what you heard is not what I meant."

- ❖ Sentences are written the way people speak. You never say, "I would like to tell you about a dance on the weekend." You say, "There's a dance on the weekend." Radio scripts should be "conversational talk" not "written" language. Say a sentence aloud, as if to a friend, then write it that way.
- ❖ Speak to just one listener, not a large group of people. Be close and personal. Say "you". Avoid impersonal collective terms such as "all of you", "everybody out there", "everyone" etc.
- ❖ Use questions to grab attention, particularly at the beginning, but also effective in the middle.
- ❖ Provide background information to explain events and people mentioned in the CSA. Do not just state who a person is. Listeners need to know why that person is being featured and what the person has done to deserve this attention.
- ❖ It is sometimes best to provide just a little information, then suggest that the listener call for more specific detail. Examples are CSA #2 and #4.
- ❖ Most importantly, the sample CSA's can be read in less than 45 seconds. In general — but not always true — radio stations won't accept CSA's longer than that.

5. GET THE ENDING RIGHT

Only the final sentences of CSA's contain the main contact details of When (time and date), Where (address, telephone number), Who (name of a person to contact). Don't give this information in the opening sentences. Listeners won't remember details because they haven't yet been told why they should remember them. Get their attention and interest first (What? Why?) then tell the listener the When, Where and Who to contact. Sometimes it is effective to repeat information. The last line of PSA #3, for example, reinforces the main message.

6. CHECK THE DRAFT FOR SPOKEN LANGUAGE

Read it out aloud to someone who can tell you whether it sounds okay or not. Does it "sound" right? Does it sound conversational, as though you are talking? Do the ideas flow logically from one sentence to another? Can it be read in 30-45 seconds? If necessary, rewrite it. Ask someone else to listen to the second draft.

7. WRITE AND FORMAT THE CSA

- ❖ Write a covering note on your organisation's letter head
- ❖ Write the CSA on normal-length paper, using one side only
- ❖ Use double spacing between lines
- ❖ At the top of the page give this information:
 - TITLE OF CSA: A title such as Annual Fundraising Dance on 22 March 2003
 - NAME OF ORGANISATION AND ADDRESS: (name of your organisation and mailing address)
 - STARTING DATE FOR AIRING: The first date it can be aired
 - ENDING DATE FOR AIRING: The last date it can be aired
 - DATE SUBMITTED:
 - CONTACT PERSON: (Who and how if we need to)

(Insert the CSA using the following format — also see the four samples)

- double spacing between lines
- unfamiliar names of people and places are spelt correctly then phonetically, in brackets. See how the writer of CSA #2 dealt with the unfamiliar name of Younis MULKAR
- names of people, organisations or places in CAPITAL LETTERS
- numbers or sums of money are also written in full (TWO instead of 2) and in CAPITAL LETTERS (this does not apply to times, dates, street addresses or mail box numbers). Examples are CSA #2 and #3.

8. GET IT TO US

Mail, e-mail, fax or deliver it to the radio station, to arrive as early as possible before the first airing date.

CSA EXAMPLE 1

TITLE OF CSA: Youth group for young people
NAME OF ORGANISATION AND ADDRESS:
STARTING DATE FOR AIRING:
ENDING DATE FOR AIRING:
DATE SUBMITTED:
CONTACT PERSON:

Are you missing out on something in life? Good music that has something to say? Friends who really care about you?

Stimulating conversation? If you're aged between 17 and 24, you don't need to miss out anymore.

You can join other young people who are making the most of life. They're finding that life has more to offer than they thought possible. Do you want to join us? We'd like to see you. Come along to the (name of organisation).

We get together every SATURDAY night at 7.30 PM. You'll find us (location).

For more information call (name of person) on 123 456 during office hours. The number again - 123 456, and ask for (name of person).

CSA EXAMPLE 2

TITLE OF CSA: Chess club
NAME OF ORGANISATION AND ADDRESS:
STARTING DATE FOR AIRING:
ENDING DATE FOR AIRING:
DATE SUBMITTED:
CONTACT PERSON:

Chess is a game. A club is a group of people. A chess club is a place where men, women, teenagers, boys and girls match their wits with other people who enjoy playing chess. The (name of club) Chess Club is open every weekend, and you're welcome to join us.

Learn new techniques and strategies to improve your game. Use our club chess sets, or bring your own.

The (name of club) Chess Club has club rooms in various parts of (city). The clubs are open every Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 AM until 10:00 PM. Mr YOUNIS MULKAR (pronounced YOO-NISS), the current champion of the ASIAN CHESS REGIONAL TOURNAMENT will give demonstrations on OCTOBER 23 and 24.

For more information telephone (name of person) on 123 456.

CSA EXAMPLE #3

TITLE OF CSA: Toys needed
NAME OF ORGANISATION AND ADDRESS:
STARTING DATE FOR AIRING:
ENDING DATE FOR AIRING:
DATE SUBMITTED:
CONTACT PERSON:

TWELVE MONTHS ago, FIFTY FIVE small children roamed around BANJAR BONBON in INDONESIA with nothing to do. Now, the children attend a child care centre every day. They're given a nutritious lunch. They play games, and are taught to read, write and count.

Volunteers work in BANJAR BONBON to help these families. But they need your help. They especially need toys for the children to play with. The (name of organisation) is collecting toys or games that you do not need any more. They will send the toys and games to be distributed by a sister organisation there. (Name of organisation) can collect unused toys from your home or office, and put them to good use.

You can help a child less fortunate than yourself. Call (name of organisation) on 123 456.

The number again - 123 456. (Name of organisation) will collect unused toys or games from your home or office.

CSA EXAMPLE #4

TITLE OF CSA: Quit Smoking Classes
NAME OF ORGANISATION AND ADDRESS:
STARTING DATE FOR AIRING:
ENDING DATE FOR AIRING:
DATE SUBMITTED:
CONTACT PERSON:

If you have a friend who smokes then this message is for you. You can help your friend to give up smoking.

How? It's very easy. Simply by being a friend, being there to talk. Most people who try to give up smoking say they need someone to talk to — to help support them. To help take their mind off the desire to light up a cigarette.

We can show you how to help. We'll send you some pamphlets with very useful information.

Then, if you want to, you can attend a THREE HOUR training course which will give you the counselling skills you need. It's free. In the last TWELVE MONTHS, over FIFTEEN HUNDRED people have stopped smoking through this project. Be a real friend to a cigarette smoker. Phone (name of organisation) and we'll send you some information.

Here's the number 123 456. 123 456.