

**RADIO READING
RESOURCES FOR
VOLUNTEERS**



Be heard

Planning & research for
Radio Reading
programs

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RPH Australia acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands on which we work and live and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future. We embrace diversity in working to build inclusive and connected communities.

These resources have been created by **Kim Stewart** for RPH Australia utilising original materials developed by the Community Media Training Organisation (CMTO). Produced with the assistance of the **Department of Communications and the Arts** through the **Community Broadcasting Foundation**.

We also thank our project partners: **Tagged PDF** and the **CMTO**.



Planning your program content

Guiding principles

Whether you are reading from a print publication or planning a talk-based show, it's essential to plan your show. Planning helps your program be internally consistent and make sense to listeners. It also means you won't be struggling to fill in air-time because you can't think of what to say next!

RPH Radio Reading programming can be:

- Reading of articles from daily, and other general circulation newspapers;



- Subject based programs that feature readings in an identified topic area— from newspapers, magazines, and other publications;
- Serialised book readings; and
- Interviews, presentations and other features that relate to subjects that are of particular relevance to an audience with a print disability.

Who is the target audience?

You'll need to consider include typical listeners to your station, but also those people you want to target specifically.

You can find out about the typical community radio audience in your region by having a look at the [National Listener Surveys](#)¹ commissioned each year by the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia. Listener surveys look at the national picture, but also at regional and urban areas. In 2018, the surveys found that 30% of Australians are tuning in to community radio, an increase of 7% since 2004. Listener surveys also tell you what time of day people listen and demographics about the listeners.

¹ <https://www.cbaa.org.au/broadcasters/get-data-national-listener-survey-station-census/national-listener-survey-fact-sheets>

The needs and interests of the community of listeners and producers both affect a program's content.

For many, the radio is an important source of information: research shows that over 45% of Australians have low literacy and 22%, or 5.5 million people, have a print disability.

This population can include people who are:

- blind or vision impaired
- functionally illiterate
- frail aged
- cerebral palsy, motor neuron and multiple sclerosis patients
- dyslexic
- stroke survivors, or arthritic
- immigrants who understand spoken, but not written English



Surveys indicate that up to 50% of listeners to RPH Radio Reading programs do not have a print disability. 'Hands or eyes busy' people, like drivers, parents at home, or retirees, enjoy the way Radio Reading keeps them up-to-date with news and current events.

Know the program objective

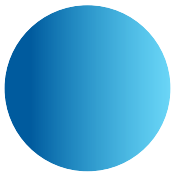
Most Radio Reading Network stations have developed programming schedules that suit each particular market. The schedules are usually developed by a programming committee or staff member. Programming policies and schedules evolve over time. They are informed by research, listener feedback and information from experts in the field of print disability. Stations will have program briefs, summaries or descriptions detailing each program's objective or content.

Once you are aware of the objectives that guide individual program content, you can identify items to include in the program in line with that brief. Consult with your team members if in doubt.

Community Radio (15+) Total Weekly Listeners - Disability status

	Have Disabilities		
	Physical disability	571	10
	Hearing impairment	497	8
	Sight impairment	685	12
	Speech impairment	122	2
	None of the above	4166	70
	Refused	377	6
	Reading Difficulty		
	Yes	288	5
	No	5668	95

Source: McNair Yellow Squares (2018) National Listener Survey Fact Sheet



Radio Reading program teams

Radio Reading stations differ from most other community radio stations through the makeup of the teams that put their programs together. Whereas in some community stations, programs are planned, produced and presented by one person, Radio Reading volunteers are usually given specific roles in a program team. One team member's role might be to operate the panel and equipment, and another team member may read the newspaper. These roles are rare at other community stations.

Radio Reading stations will have job descriptions for each role, but titles for the same role may vary. For example, an announcer at one station may do the same job a reader does at another.

● Typical role titles and descriptions are:

Program manager:

- Oversees the overall program grid/schedule
- Determines the best program focus for time of day and week
- Develops briefs as guidelines for each program
- Ensures the RPH Programming Standards are maintained
- Co-ordinates & communicates with others in the program team
- Monitors, evaluates and feeds back to team members

Researcher

- Finds program material for reading
- Communicates with team members about the material

Technical operator

- Operates technical equipment for live broadcast and program recording and editing
- Communicates with team members from technical perspectives
- Monitors, evaluates and feeds back to team members

Producer

- Co-ordinates the production of specific programs
- Team leader for program planning and presentation of live to air and recorded programs
- Prepares running sheets
- Prepares written program links including introductory, incidental and closing remarks, forward program promotion and other contextual items.

Presenter/reader/announcer

- Follows team leader's instructions
- Prepares and pre-reads reading material
- Reads printed material without editing, editorialising, censoring or ad-libbing

The exact make up of a program team will depend on a number of factors, including program timing and volunteer availability.

The minimum roles needed in any Radio Reading program team are readers, panel

operators, team leader and researchers. These roles could be each performed by different people, or some (very talented) people may undertake a number of roles effectively. Usually, a minimum of two readers is required, to ensure smooth transitions between articles, and to aid listener engagement. However you choose to staff your program, teamwork is crucial to providing this vital information service to people with print disabilities.

Programming

Program content and where to source it

Radio Reading Network stations' programming policies are developed to suit the information and entertainment needs of their particular community of interest. They ensure their program grid includes readings of publications that have local relevance as well as those with broader appeal. The emphasis is on providing broad, varied and trusted sources of information.

For example, [Vision Australia Radio Melbourne](https://radio.visionaustralia.org/our-networks/melbourne)'s² 250+ committed volunteers broadcast over 100 hours of reading and specialist programs each week. Their diverse and unique program schedule includes: news, features and readings from newspapers and magazines; book readings; and specialised information programs from government and disability organisations.

² <https://radio.visionaustralia.org/our-networks/melbourne>

The Radio Reading Network is also renowned for its "audio description" services, where highly skilled commentators describe televised events such as tennis matches, Carols by Candlelight, and New Year's Eve fireworks, for people with a vision impairment.

Picture below: Students training for program production at Radio 4RPH in Brisbane.





**Vision Australia
Radio**

6RPH Perth

The programming schedule at Vision Australia Radio in Perth is as varied as its audiences, listeners will be hard pressed to find subjects that are not covered. The information broadcast falls into two broad categories and includes:

1. Current News & Information

The West Australian, The Australian, The Sunday Times, community newspapers, Financial Review, alternate newspapers, daily stock market reports

Government: Centrelink, Veterans Affairs, Transperth

Magazines: The Economist, Time Magazine, Business Review Weekly, Financial Review, National Geographic, Australian Geographic

BBC: World Service News, Sports Roundup

2. Current Lifestyle Information

Programs: The Law & You, Garden Grapevine, Bookshelf, DIY Show, The Health Show, Prime Time, Book at Bedtime, Short Stories, A Look at the Arts, What's Cooking, His Choice Her Choice, Food for Health, Bits & Bytes.

Selection of articles

It is impossible to read every article from every newspaper or publication, so the Radio Reading Network has developed broad guidelines for program producers and editors to use in the article selection process:

The general principle is to follow the structure of the publication as well as the intentions of the editor of the publication.

- 1. Select lead stories from each section of the publication for reading**
- 2. Choose shorter articles in the last section of the program**
- 3. Prepare “filler” or short articles to bring the program in on time**

For example, if you are researching your local newspaper: 50% of your content would be the lead stories, 20% may be world news, 10% may be local news and 10% each to business and sport. Percentages may differ but the selection process is the same.

Other selection issues are discussed below.

News stories versus features

When preparing a news program many people have trouble differentiating between news items and feature articles. Some features are obvious – the page opposite the editorial for example. But others are contained within the news pages and they're harder to recognise. Features include film, music or theatre reviews, or comment upon the news of the day. These articles should be set aside for other specialist programs.

Avoid the Advertising Trap!

Watch out for “advertorials” or any other advertising presented as news or features. No matter how appropriate to your audience, these **must not be used**. They are categorised as commercial time. Reading these may breach ACMA’s community radio licensing regulations

What does this mean for producer/presenters/researchers?

Producers construct whole programs and consider additional factors when planning and selecting articles for a Radio Reading program. They need to work across the team to ensure that the entire program will be interesting and coherent. They need to consider listener engagement, and how selecting and sequencing articles produces a variety of interest and tone. Although many news articles will be “weighty” in content and sober in tone, others should offer relief in weight, length and tone. Achieving a satisfying sequence and balance is the editorial team’s challenge. Use other members of the team for input into these considerations.

Reading printed material

Practice, practice, practice...

Reading publications on radio to engage listeners is an art. Remember that the relationship is between you and the listener, not you and the text, and that speech is not smooth and perfect, and doesn’t go from left to right! Practice by speaking printed material, not reading it. Check out the exercises in our ‘Presentation skills for radio readers’ guide to help you extend your vocal communication ability and have fun with your voice. Record your vocal practice when you can so you can hear the effects.



Preparation for reading

Program readers must pre-read prior to reading on air. Make a note on the backing sheet or in the columns of relevant articles if:

- There is any phonetic spelling that will help with pronunciation;
- You have a time call after that article;
- Your article is the first to be read after a sponsor break/song etc.

The broadcast

Before the shift you can warm up your voice by some practice reading tongue twisters (or even singing).

Have your chair as close as possible to the desk. Posture—back straight, shoulders back but relaxed.

The presenter introduces the program by giving a station identification for example,

“This is Radio RPH. The time is on (day) (date). Reading today are (names) and our panellist is (name).”

The presenter will give a run-down of the next five or six articles to be read on the program. It is recommended that the presenter does not read the first article, and hands over to the reader for this.

Before starting the first article, the reader introduces themselves to create a personal, friendly connection with the listener.

Back announce the article when finished

“That reading was from(source) on the(date)(title)..... by (author).”

Hand signals

Readers alternate with their readings. Each reader indicates with a raised hand when they are near the end of their article, alerting the next reader to their turn.

The presenter is responsible for watching the clock and managing the timing of the program. The presenter controls the program and communications with the reader and operator with hand signals, eye contact and written signs e.g. “break next” etc.

There are special features of each program. These can be learned from on the job experience, by observing and speaking to other readers, presenters, operators and listening to the station.

Swearing or challenging concepts

If an article contains potentially offensive language—a rare occurrence—a short announcement like, “The following article contains material which may offend some listeners”, may be appropriate.

Turning the pages

Learn to turn the pages slowly and silently as background paper rustling and other noises are annoying for listeners.

Breaks

Breaks are generally at about 20 minutes past and twenty minutes to the hour.

Breaks are pre-recorded announcements such as paid sponsorships, community announcements and musical stings.

Communicate to your tech or team members by using hand gestures, notes or waiting until the break. Have a smile in your voice.

Smiling while talking will make you sound friendly. Of course, there are occasions when this does not always apply e.g. a serious news item such as murder or child abuse.

Using the headphones

On-air studios are equipped with headphone sets for each of the readers. Listening to your own voice in the headphones will let you know exactly how your audience is hearing you and is an invaluable aid to lifting the quality of your presentation.

Handling mistakes

If you are reading a magazine or book which is being recorded for future broadcast, only the most trivial of mistakes should go uncorrected. As you are being recorded it is a simple matter for the recording to be stopped at the point where the mistake was made and an edit executed to remove the word or phrase you tripped over. In such cases you start reading again from the beginning of the sentence where you stumbled.

Program self-evaluation

There is no better way to improve your presentation style than by listening back to your program with the purpose of noting things you can improve.

If you are evaluating others, it pays to be compassionate! Community radio is about being collaborative and uniting us in our common goals.

Issues to consider when evaluating your program or that of others:

- be diplomatic and constructive
- be willing to accept feedback on your own programs.

When reflecting on the effectiveness of a program, criteria can include:

- whether it met the program brief and station objectives;
- was preparation adequate?
- did the timing work?
- was the sequencing right?
- article selection ok?
- how was the reading – volume, emphasis, phrasing and inflection? mistakes?
- technical production
- communication in studio.



Steve Sparrow is a producer at 4RPH, who is also blind.

Steve is a community radio producer who has been at 4RPH in Brisbane for more than a decade. He records and produces sponsorship announcements, audio books and other recordings at the station.

Steve is a country singer, songwriter and an accomplished guitarist. He was a top five finalist at the Tamworth Song Writers Association, in 2017 with his song “Just Can’t Sleep” and won a golden guitar at the Gore Country Music Festival in New Zealand. Steve had a number one on Australian Country Tracks Top 40 Chart with his song “Social Media Freak”.

Steve’s audio skills are also being utilised in his own home studio where he has recorded many up and coming country artists.

His website:
sparrowsound.com.au/about-steve/

Standards for RPH Programming

The RPH Programming Standards ensure fidelity, faithfulness and reliability to source materials, so that the programme can be considered a faithful and honest representation of the material it broadcasts. According to the Standards:

RPH programming must be:

- produced locally by the radio station and/or independent program producers.
- broadcast on a community radio station in program blocks of at least 30 minutes between the hours of 6.00 a.m. and midnight
- Music (except program themes), sponsorship announcements and other program material not specific to the needs of people with a print disability should not be included when calculating ‘RPH time’

RPH programming can be:

- Reading of news and feature articles from daily, and other general circulation newspapers
- Subject based programs that feature readings in an identified topic area – from newspapers, magazines, and other publications, including from reliable sources on the internet.
- Interviews, presentations and other features that relate to subjects that are of

particular relevance to an audience with a print disability.

Copyright

Radio Reading programming provides an accurate and complete record of the original source and therefore enjoys a special status within the Copyright Act.

To comply with Copyright regulations, RPH programming using printed materials must follow these Standards:

- All source materials must be read in full
- The text cannot be varied or abbreviated in any way
- No editorial comment can be made
- Programs must correctly state the title of the publication, edition, date of publication, page number, and author's name.

These are two circumstances when programs can depart from these requirements:

- A reader might need to vary the text to deal with obvious printing or grammatical errors
- At the end of a program or program segment a reader may need to abbreviate an article because they've run out of time.

Program producers departing from the copyright requirements should use their judgement and common sense and always consider the listeners who rely on them for

equal access to the information they are providing.

Community consultation and engagement standards

These Standards aim to ensure station engagement and consultation with people with a print disability to ensure RPH programs are relevant and accessible.

Community stations and RPH program producers should ensure that they:

- Engage in a process of ongoing consultation with:
 - Listeners with a print disability;
 - Organisations of people with a print disability; and
 - Organisations that provide services to people with a print disability.
- Provide access to organisations of or providing services to people with a print disability. The station retains the right to ensure that all material broadcast conforms with quality, legislative, and legal requirements.
- Try to involve local people with a print disability in program production.
- Follow the [Community Broadcasting Codes of Practice](#)³

Read the full Standards on the RPHA website.⁴

³ <https://www.cbaa.org.au/resource/codes-practice-introduction>

⁴ https://www.rph.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/RPHA_Standards_for_RPH_Programming_on_Community_Radio_2018_359KB.pdf

Writing program content

There will be occasions when you may be asked to produce or write program elements such as program pointers or teasers, station IDs or other program elements that might link other parts of the program together.

When you are writing program promos or station IDs there are some guidelines that will be helpful.

Writing for radio is the storage of talk. Presentation is the retrieval of that talk out of storage. The writing on paper is crude, with little information for the reader to convey the meaning of the words to the listener. When you write for radio, it is crucial that the way you write makes it easy to read for radio.

Before you write, think about what you want to say. When you think about what you are going to write, imagine you are talking to one person. Radio works when you connect with one person. Visualise that person when you are thinking about what you will write. Then say it out aloud. Is it easy to say? Is it punchy and efficient? If so, write it. Be economical. Use short sentences, spare the adjectives and ban superlatives.

For longer pieces, summarise the information at the start of the piece and have a good conclusion. Use key words to convey the message clearly. Build an image. Round off numbers where possible.



Rob Rawson is a radio reader at 1RPH

"After a career in the private and public sectors, I was encouraged by a friend to audition at 1RPH as it was thought that I had a good voice for radio.

For more than 10 years I have been a morning newspaper reader on a weekly basis and continue to enjoy those early morning starts even on a Canberra winter morning.

The key skills from my perspective are timing, pronunciation and the ability to work in a small team. The friendships I have made with other volunteers have been a highlight of working with 1RPH. Last year I also did a book reading "The Railway Man" which was distributed to the wider RPH community. I hope to do more book readings in the future. I continue to be motivated when I hear the extent to which 1RPH extends into the broader community and impacts positively on lives."

Music

Concentrating on long periods of talk can be tiring for listeners.

Music can have the same effects on the brain as meditation, helping refresh the listeners ability to concentrate. Using music as part of your shows, in your intro and outro can give the listeners' minds a break and re-engage them with the spoken content that follows.

Each Radio Reading Network station will have a music programming policy developed to suit its particular market.

Music is perfectly acceptable in a program to segue between one segment and another, but not in the middle of reading a publication.

Music programs that inform the listener about a style of music or an artist, rather than just all musical works, are acceptable forms of music programming on RPH stations. Think about what the typical listener to your station might enjoy and target any music you play to that audience.

If you are producing a topic-based program, you can use snippets of topical songs or even sound effects to illustrate your program. A good example of this is "The Runners Guide" the winner of the 2018 National Features and Documentary series. The program is about Archilles Brisbane, an organisation increasing participation of athletes with a disability via guided parkruns. It uses a mixture of topical songs and sounds recorded in the field to illustrate the experiences of runners who have a vision impairment or blindness, to great effect.

Picture: Katharina Loesche (centre) accepts the award for her documentary "The Runners Guide" from Martin Walters (CBAA) and Giordana Caputo (CMT0).



About this resource

You can find more Radio Reading Resources for [stations](#) and for [volunteers](#) on our website.

We developed these community media training resources to support the Regional Development project, which aims to broaden the national reach of Radio Reading services to reach people with a print disability living in regional and remote areas.

RPH Australia is supporting stations, outside the current Radio Reading Network, to produce new, diverse, quality local programming made by and for people with a print disability in their community. [Contact us](#) to find out more.

About us

RPH Australia is the peak body for the Radio Reading Network; community radio services dedicated to providing access to information for the estimated 5 million Australians with a print disability. We champion the rights of all people to access printed material, empowering equal participation in cultural, political and social life.

Radio Reading programming aims to meet the information needs of people with a print disability (those who are unable to effectively access printed material due to visual, physical or cognitive impairment, age or low literacy).

It provides a voice for people in our community with a print disability and caters directly to their information needs and interests.

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Tune in or support your local Radio Reading station via the [RPH Australia website](#).