# CSB/SJU Podcast Script Writing Guide[1]

## GLOBAL SUGGESTIONS
- Use a script to sound more focused, produced, and polished and ensure your information is clear, concise, and in order.
- Conversational writing needs to sound natural, not stilted and artificial.
- Write and speak clearly. Listeners only hear it once, unless they replay it. Your meaning has to be clear the first time your listeners hear it.
- Use inclusive language such as 'we' and 'our' to build a connection with listeners.
- Pay attention to rhythm. A bit of variety holds a listener's attention longer.

## TELEGRAPHING YOUR SCRIPT
- Tell them:
  - Who's talking (host and guest, if it's an interview) and what's coming up
- Don't forget the ending:
  - End with a call to action and/or resource information.

## WRITE LIKE A SPEAKER
- Write everything the way you would say it, not the way you would read it.
- In your script writing, try to use contractions and simple words.
- Write it out exactly as you want it read. Example: What does ".25 in." mean? Point-two-five inches? A quarter of an inch?
- Write out numbers one through nine. Use numerals for 10 through 999. Write out words like "thousand" and "million."
- Write out names for symbols. Example: "Dollars" rather than "$."
- When using an acronym or abbreviation in a script, make sure you establish the full name first. Example: *We'll examine optical character recognition, also known as OCR*. In general, avoid all but the most common acronyms whenever possible.
- Eliminating unnecessary words frees time for words you do need. Example:
  Instead of: *The club meeting **that was** held at the coffeehouse was lively.*
  Use this: *The club meeting held at the coffeehouse was lively.*

## USE SHORT SENTENCES
- Use short sentences of 25 words or less so listeners can easily follow your words.
- A sentence shouldn't take more than one breath to say.
- Convey one idea per sentence.
- Example: Instead of: *Thompson, who trained as a lawyer at Harvard and went on to get his MBA at Wharton, assumed his current position last February.*
  Use this: *Thompson trained as a lawyer at Harvard and went on to get his MBA at Wharton. He assumed his current position last February.*

## AVOID THE PASSIVE VOICE IN ORDER TO ADD DIRECTNESS
- Example: Instead of: *The car was driven by the boy.* Use: *The boy drove the car.*
- Active language has the additional benefit of shortening your sentences.

## WRITE FROM A TO B (LINEAR STRUCTURE)

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[1] Adapted from the CDC Audio Script Writing Guide and Rachel Salaman, Audio for the Web.

- You must make it clear the first time. People don't want to replay the file to understand something. If they don't understand it the first time, they generally won't try to review it.
- Don't start a sentence with a subordinate clause (use your discretion).
- For example, instead of: *Even though it wasn't clear exactly what the job entailed, Thompson thought his new role would be a chance to escape the humdrum life of an attorney.*
  Use this: *Thompson thought his new role would be a chance to escape the humdrum life of an attorney, even though it wasn't clear exactly what the job entailed.*

## USE CONTRACTIONS
- Contractions sound informal and friendlier.  Also, it's easier and more natural for the narrator to read.  Examples:  There is = there's; Do not = don't；Is not = isn't.

## PUT PUNCTUATION TO WORK
- Punctuation in scripts is visible to the narrator only and reminds them where to pause.
- Typically, the most useful punctuation is commas, dashes, and periods.
- For example, read this sentence aloud to see how these three punctuation marks guide the reader: *Qualities like patience, the willingness to listen, and believing that there's something good in everyone, are what set these women apart – along with their commitment.*

## DON'T USE BRACKETS OR QUOTES
- Why not brackets (parenthesis)? You can't see them; this is audio!
- Instead of: *All employees not only need to know what the company's mission is (so leaders must not stop communicating) but they also need to know what they can do to make it happen.*
- Use this: *All employees need to know what the company's mission is, and what they can do to make it happen. So leaders must never stop communicating.*
- Why not quotation marks?
  - It's not clear when a quote ends and the listener may lose track.
  - If you use a quote, start with a signal phrase such as "In these words."
  - For long quotations, consider using a different voice. For example, if you're an SJU student, ask a CSB student to read the quote.

## FORMAT FOR READABILITY
- Times Roman 14 point font.
- 1.5 spaced lines – or greater, if your narrator prefers.
- Break the pages at the ends of sentences.
- Number the lines (MS Word will do this automatically).
- Write out URLs as they should be read. For example: w-w-w-dot-c-d-c-dot-gov.
- Spell out unusual words phonetically, with stress. For example: Xochimilco = zoch-ee-MIL-co.

## READ YOUR SCRIPT OUT LOUD & HAVE SOMEONE ELSE READ IT OUT LOUD
- Do you/they stumble? Does it flow well? Does it make sense?
- Are there any sound-a-likes or homonyms?  For example: Thompson won a special achievement award from the Law Society, and his wife won two. Or was that "too"?
- Bring to a Writing Center Tutor!