

NATURAL SOUND REPORT
BROADCAST NEWS
SPRING 2008

SCRIPT AND TAPE DEADLINE: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19

For your next reporting assignment, find a story that has strong “nat” or natural sound possibilities. Natural or ambient sounds are sounds other than the voices of the reporter or the people you interview. Total running time (including the anchor lead): 1:30-2:00.

Report needs to have three or more “nat sound” breaks or spikes in which we hear the sounds by themselves up full for a few seconds.

The report also must have at least two soundbites from two different people.

A couple examples of how to do this: in a feature about the Coastal Carolina Fair, we would hear fair and carnival type sounds. In a profile of a pianist or another musician, we would hear short clips of the instrument he or she plays.

These sounds help bring the story alive and help engage or reconnect the listener to the report. Creatively used “nat sound breaks” can really enhance the quality and effectiveness of radio and television news stories. Such sound elements can be used at the beginning of the report, in the middle, and/or at the end.

Along with being used up full, natural sound should also be used under the reporter’s voice as a “bed.” This adds texture to the report. If you use the nat sound up full, then “pod it down” or lower the sound volume and speak over it so that we still hear the sound in the background. You can also fade out the sound.

To use natural sound effectively may take some trial and error in the production process.

A common problem with this report is that we hear a sound but we’re not sure what it is. Also, don’t use nat sound for excessively long stretches. It is best used when we hear it for just two-to-four seconds, as little “spikes” that bring the story alive and enhance the pace and flow. Also be careful to not have the nat sound up so high that it’s hard to understand your voice.

And it can be helpful to prepare listeners for the sounds they are about to hear. So think about this as you write your anchor lead and reporter script. If your report opens with natural sound, for example, your anchor lead should help prepare listeners for the sound and not leave listeners puzzled as to what the sound is and means.

Be sure on your script, when you use nat sound up full, write that on the script. For example: “Nat Sound Full: five seconds (car engine)”

Be creative and have fun with this one!

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