

Tips for logging audio

During the recording session

Many audio recorders have features for “marking” the audio. This allows you to hit a button while you are recording to mark spots that you want to quickly return to. See if your recorder has it and use it.

Logging tips

- Log your audio as soon as possible after you do the interview while it is still fresh.
- Log your sound BEFORE you start writing. Your soundbites should drive the story.
- Listen for soundbites that express judgment, emotion, expertise, drama, partisanship or a witness account. Facts, figures and straightforward information can be better and more concisely written in the reporter track. If you are not using a reporter track -- as in a sound portrait or a vox pop -- choose actualities that stand on their own. (This means you must coach your interviewees to speak in complete sentences and you must ask good follow-up questions.)
- For shorter radio stories (in the range of 5 minutes, less or more), a good rule of thumb is to choose actualities that are an average of :15-:20. You may want to use longer actualities in a 15-20 minute piece, but remember that long isn't necessarily better. The clips should be just long enough to be compelling, interesting and move the story forward.
- **IMPORTANT:** Note start and end time code for the actualities, or note how long the clip is. You need to know how long your actualities are while you are writing to get a rough idea of how your piece is.
- For daily deadline reporting and short-term projects avoid spending too much time over-logging. Listen for actualities that have the best potential. At minimum, log how the clip starts and ends to help you write into and out of the actuality.
- If you are logging for a longer term feature, most people prefer to log word-for-word and have a fairly complete transcript of the interview.
- Develop a system for marking good clips on your log. You can use stars or highlight in colors. Anything that helps you quickly and easily find the best choices.
- Indicate time codes frequently throughout your log to help you quickly pinpoint

sections of the interview you might want to use.

- Identify your best actualities for that interview. They may become the backbone of your story.
- Log your questions. You may want to use the question and answer in a piece, especially a long one.
- Indicate on your log what sound is more ambient-like and what is straight interview.

You may want to invest in a transcribing program such as InqScribe.com, which offers a discount to students.

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