
Audio presentation skills

Guidance from UKAAF

Why format quality matters

"When organisations send me information in formats that I can read myself it allows me to be independent, feel informed and appreciated - just like every other customer."

End-user

"Producing consistently high quality accessible formats helps us to maintain our reputation, to gain new customers and to retain existing ones."

Transcription agency

"We are committed to ensuring that our customers with print disabilities receive the same information, of the same quality, as everyone else."

Service provider

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Who is this guidance for?

This guidance from the UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF) is primarily aimed at producers of audio formats. It will be particularly useful for people who are new to the area of producing audio materials for print-disabled people.

The guidance includes information on:

- Editorial preparation of the text
- Setting up and preparing for the recording session
- Reading the text
- Tips and hints to help when recording
- Correct positioning of information
- Final quality checks

Disclaimer

This guidance may include references to external websites, services or products for which UKAAF accepts no responsibility. This information is given without any representation or endorsement of those websites, services or products.

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1 Introduction

By obtaining these guidelines you are demonstrating your commitment to helping people with a print disability to read your materials if they find reading standard print materials difficult or impossible.

This guidance concentrates specifically on materials suitable for blind and partially sighted people - such as large print, audio, braille and electronic file formats. However, others with a print disability, for example with dyslexia or motor-difficulties, may also find such materials necessary.

The provision of accessible information is a key requirement of the Equality Act which service providers must follow, but good customer service and business practice includes communicating with your customers and staff in ways which meet their reading needs. By providing accessible format materials, you not only demonstrate your commitment to equality and inclusion, but also increase your reach and customer base. It therefore makes good business sense.

This guidance will help you and your organisation to incorporate good practice into your business and provide good quality accessible format materials in a timely and appropriate way.

2 About UKAAF

The UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF) is the industry association whose mission is to set standards for accessible formats that meet end-user needs through:

- development, delivery and promotion of codes, standards, and best practice for the production and provision of accessible formats

- consultation and collaboration with transcribers, service providers and users of accessible formats.

Members of UKAAF include organisations and individuals with an interest in the provision of quality accessible formats, such as service providers, transcribers, educators, researchers, print services, publishers, and end-users.

Through its leadership and representation, standards-setting, and by fostering a spirit of cooperation between members, UKAAF ensures that the needs and requirements of end-users are understood by service providers and transcribers to help improve the quality of accessible formats.

Please see the section on "Where to get further help" towards the end of this document for more information about the benefits of being a member of UKAAF.

3 Definition of print disability

A print disabled person means a person who has a physical or mental impairment which prevents the person from enjoying a copyright work to the same degree as a person who does not have that impairment, and "disability" is to be construed accordingly. A person is not to be regarded as disabled by reason only of an impairment of visual function which can be improved, by the use of corrective lenses, to a level that is normally acceptable for reading without a special level or kind of light. Source: Statutory Instrument No. 1384. The Copyright and Rights in Performances (Disability) Regulations 2014.

4 Audio presentation skills

This guidance concentrates on the problems associated with presenting general text in a way in which the listener can easily access it, and will receive the same message as the person looking at the print version.

As in so many spheres, the secret of success appears to lie in a combination of forethought and imagination. Rarely can one just "start reading", with no preparation before settling down in front of the recorder. There are at least three areas to consider before you start:

- Confirm you have the legal copyright permission to record the material in front of you
- Assuming you have permission, the material must be considered and an overall strategy planned for its presentation, what will be read where, what help will be given to the listener so that it is clear what is coming, where specific sections can be found etc.
- And finally, you the reader, must prepare before each recording session

If you are a "one-man band" you will be doing everything. The temptation will be to miss out the preparation before you start each recording session. Try not to; you still need to refresh your memory.

If you are a member of a larger organisation, you may feel that as a reader, the editorial preparation is of no concern of yours and skip this section - don't! The philosophy behind it should guide you as a reader just as much as those whose duties are solely to prepare the text.

5 Editorial preparation of the text

"Editorial" in this context does not mean deciding what to read and what to leave out. All of us as transcribers into audio are in the business of giving access to the material exactly as written or printed. However choices do have to be made as to how to read in such a way that the listener can understand what the author was

saying. Reading is rarely as simple as starting at the top left hand corner and reading down to the bottom right.

General

The print copy you are preparing to record almost inevitably will have been designed for visual impact. For instance, depending on the material and how great the input of the marketing department or graphic designers, there will be visual attention grabbers of some sort. These may range from sunbursts to underlined headings; colour coding may well have been used; items such as telephone numbers will have been listed where they are easy to refer to in the print copy.

None of this is relevant when the material is transcribed to audio, the impact and guidance offered by the visual layout has to be achieved by alternative methods.

There are no hard and fast rules, and print material is so varied that it would be impossible to cover every contingency. Thus the aim of the following is to offer a few examples as to how to convert from visual to aural impact, which will hopefully give you some ideas you can follow through in your own particular case.

Headlines

Headlines enable you to see at a glance the topics covered: the verbal equivalent is a contents list. It is helpful to number the items in the list, and to repeat these numbers when you reach the actual topic. It is much easier to remember you want item seven, and to tell the listener they have not gone far enough through the recording when they hear item six being announced, than it is to remember the order in which the items occur - unless alphabetical.

A "pull-quote" is the device, common in newspapers, of pulling out a few words from the text and highlighting them either as headings or enlarged type. Unless you can turn them into headings, it is

usually best to ignore pull quotes and other such devices, they just sound repetitious.

Margin notes

These vary sometimes, they can be used as headings, but when they are only visual summaries it may be simpler just to omit them. If the note relates to the text you should decide how you will include the note as you read the main text.

Indexing

If you are listing the topics covered at the beginning of the recording, it is a good idea to give the listener some indication of roughly where to find the item of interest to enable them to search for that particular item. You can give an indication by saying which item number it is in the Contents list. Alternatively specific place finding can be achieved by marking the start of each item in some way - two or three bars of music, or a 15-20 second silence will do for most general texts.

As to what to index, that depends on what you are reading, and who you are reading it for. If you are reading a magazine or newspaper article, you will probably want to mark the start of each item, or place each item in a separate recorded track/chapter so that the listener can skip on to the next one if it is not of interest, or come back and find the track/heading if it merits re-reading. If reading several letters, with digital recording you have the option of each one in an individual track or in the same track perhaps separated by a small silence. If reading recipes, each one needs marking separate track.

Try to imagine using your recording and you will see the tracks/headings/breaks which you need to identify.

Positioning the items in the recording

Much care will probably have gone into designing the print layout so that it is easy to refer back to useful facts and figures.

Telephone numbers may be listed on the back page; quick reference tables are often laid out across the centre fold, or printed on a handy insert card.

Similar attention needs to be given to planning future access to the items recorded. For instance, information placed at the beginning of the recording is much more accessible than material buried in the middle.

Whatever you do, don't just read the text where it is printed without thinking or you may cause confusion to the user.

Tip: For example, a washing machine instruction booklet placed the table giving the summary of the various programmes across the centre fold pages. The descriptive text ran up to this table and then jumped two pages and continued after the table. The reader unfortunately read the pages just as they came, with the lengthy two-page table buried in the middle of instructions as to how to clean the filter! As the table is the only thing most of us refer to after the first reading, it would probably have been sensible in this case to have read the table at the very beginning of the recording, where it could easily be found in the future.

6 Setting up and preparing for the recording session

Make yourself comfortable - ensure that the room in which you are going to record is well lit; and that you have the recorder within easy reach, on a stable surface. Take time to settle yourself: stretch and relax to make sure that from above the waist you are relaxed, especially shoulders and neck.

Spend a few minutes skimming the material - check the basics such as author and title, read any summaries, find the heading of your particular chapter/section, and skim through not just to your starting point but to the next main heading.

If you really do not have time to do this, at least look at the beginning and end of the next section before starting to read, and let the middle take care of itself. Looking to see how a piece finishes can save you many a re-read as, for instance, when a piece on undertakers which you started reading fairly seriously, turns out to have a humorous slant which makes your chosen tone completely inappropriate.

- Check the acoustics - if you are not in a studio and the recording sounds echoey, try pulling the curtains, or making a "studio" by hanging blankets around you and the recorder. Avoid ticking and chiming clocks, fridges, noisy central heating pipes. Try not to make extraneous noises yourself - watch out for clanking jewellery, sniffs, noisy page-turning. Be especially careful not to knock the microphone itself or its stand, even a slight flick with the edge of the page makes a tremendous intrusion.
- Check that the machine and microphone are working properly. You are aiming for a strong level and not too much hiss and background noise.
- If you are using a machine with an adjustable level facility, make sure that it is set correctly.
- If you are not running off the mains, check that your batteries are fully charged.

For more detailed information on positioning and using the recording equipment, see UKAAF's guidance on audio recording techniques (G010).

For detailed information on improving the sound of your voice, see UKAAF's guidance on audio reading skills (G012).

Limbering up exercises

Assuming time permits limbering up is a good idea.

Some favourite limbering up exercises:

- Lips, teeth, tip of the tongue
- Many men make mayhem
- Unique New York, Unique New York
- Floppy, fluffy puppies
- Rubber baby buggy bumpers
- The sixth Sheikh's sixth sheep's sick
- Two toads totally tired of trying to trot to Tewksbury

Announcements

Give a clear announcement at the start of each recording. Let the listener know immediately what the content is about.

Details

Include full-details of the journalist or author, title, publisher, date of publication, and any other such information.

Identity

Insert the name of your organisation and the date of the recording, if appropriate.

Sections

It is important to give page numbers or section headings during the recording. However in a novel, it might be more appropriate to read out chapter headings and omit page numbers; in an agenda or

committee report, it might be better to give headings and item numbers. You should develop your own procedures to meet the needs of your listeners. After the initial announcements, the reader should provide information on how the material is set out - details of indexing, etc.

Contents list

Read the contents list in full if already printed. As suggested earlier, you may have to compile your own contents list e.g. if you are recording a batch of separate committee papers. Indicate at the beginning of the recording if you are compiling a separate index/directory recording.

7 Reading the text

Accuracy

The most important thing is to produce an accurate recording of the full text. You should not leave out portions of the text that you consider irrelevant. You should not insert your own comments or let your judgements intrude in any way, even by adopting an ironic tone when you are recording something with which you do not agree. You can make it impossible for the listener to hear what the author is trying to say.

Errors and corrections

With digital recording and the ease to “Cut and Paste” to correct mistakes it is simple and recommended to adopt a policy of absolute accuracy. If you do not have an absolute accuracy policy and make a small mistake, for example, if you stumble over a word, you can correct yourself without stopping and without apology. However, if you make a mistake with a number, or if you make a more substantial error such as losing the thread of a long sentence, you should go back and re-record from the end of the

last correctly-read sentence and subsequently edit the mistake out of the recording.

Reading speed

Do not read deliberately slowly, reading aloud is always slower than reading at sight anyway - but at the same time, don't gabble. Make sure that you convey the material clearly. Replay some of your recordings and check the speed/comprehensibility.

When to stop recording

Always stop recording if you have a cold; have a rest if you have a sneezing attack or hiccups; and don't carry on reading for too long. Have a break if you are tired or your voice sounds bored. If you carry on reading when you are tired, you are more likely to make mistakes and your recording will be harder to understand.

Provide an overview

Don't forget that the listener will only have the information you give them. They aren't psychic, so cannot tell that what follows is a long list of address/summaries of your basic rights. So if appropriate, give a little help by adding an informative sub-heading (e.g. "Local Offices: a list of the 24 offices in this area, giving address, telephone number, and opening hours.") Consider adding that this is additional information, then the listener knows they can skip that section unless they need that particular information.

Read intelligently

Sometimes it will not be appropriate to read all the words on the page. For instance it is common for instruction manuals to give frequent illustrations showing where a button is located or in the case of a television or a manual for computer software, what is displayed on the screen. Here the important point is often not the actual wording on the screen, but the appearance of the text (e.g.

"First paragraph has now been highlighted") or the changes to the text (e.g. "The information box now says 'calculating").

When purpose is important

Sometimes you will need to know why the listener requires the information. If you are reading a number of job application forms for a Personnel Officer involved in a recruitment process, they will just want to have the information which the applicant has provided. If however the Personnel Officer was new to the job, they may well want to only know the questions which the form asks. Alternatively the same Personnel Officer might be engaged in a review of the form itself and need to know the exact layout of the printed text. The recording in these three instances would be completely different.

Don't repeat information

Resist the temptation to repeat, for instance, telephone numbers. There is a rewind/search facility on most audio playback machines. Just read the information once, at a reasonably slow pace.

8 Tips and hints

Pronunciation and spelling

When you are unsure of the pronunciation of a word, you could check using a dictionary. If a word or name cannot be found, read it as phonetically as possible, spell it and then try to stick to the same pronunciation throughout the recording.

Foreign names should be pronounced as in their country of origin and then spelt in English (except in a completely foreign text).

When the native pronunciation is unknown, anglicise it. Stick to 5 simple vowel sounds, laying equal stress on each syllable:

- "a" as in "ant"

- "e" as in "egg"
- "i" as in "imp"
- "o" as in "odd"
- "u" as in "rude"

Tip: The Oxford BBC Guide to Pronunciation (Oxford University Press, 2015 Edition available from Waterstones or Amazon) is very helpful.

New terms

If you think the word might be a new term for the listener, in which case it is often highlighted in some way, be sure to spell it the first time it occurs.

Parenthesis/brackets

There are a number of ways of presenting parenthesis/brackets in a recording:

- We would recommend that you do not say when brackets have been used in straightforward text (e.g. "She was walking over the bridge (it was rather narrow), when she heard a loud splash.")
- Do not mention brackets in references (e.g. "Report of the Committee of Inquiry (Martin Report), (1964), i")
- Always include brackets in mathematics such as $2x(y + z)$ or (xy)
- In computing read brackets and specify what type is used (e.g. $()$ = round brackets, $[\]$ = square brackets)

Quotes

There is no need to say they are there in normal conversation (e.g. "Go away with you", she said, turning with a rustle of petticoats to re-enter the kitchen. "Shan't", he responded.)

It is however recommended that you specify the start and end of indented quotations:

The report argues the case of abolition:

(Quote) "The monarchy is an anachronism which cannot be justified ... (End of Quote)

Abbreviations

As a general rule, use word equivalents when abbreviations are used in the text. (e.g. i.e. (that is), c.f. (compare), e.g. (for example))

Initials

As a general rule follow the general practice, for example, a number of organisations such as ACAS are usually referred to as if the initials spelt a word, whereas others such as N.U.M. are usually spelt out.

More examples of the most common abbreviations and symbols are given in later sections of this guidance.

Bibliographies

All bibliographies should be read. In the bibliography, titles of published works bound separately, books, plays, pamphlets, or periodicals are indicated by italics or underlining. The title of a chapter or other subdivision is indicated by enclosing it in quotation marks. Neither the italics nor the quotation marks are indicated in the recording.

We recommend you:

- Read the surname first and be liberal with spelling the last names of authors
- When an author is represented by more than one listing, their name may be replaced by a line following the first entry. Repeat the name in the audio, or if the name is long you may read the line as "by the same author"

Journal citations

These should be read in the following order:

- Author(s)
- Title of article or journal in which article occurs (usually in abbreviated form), in quotation marks. The abbreviations for many journals are very similar, so unless you are absolutely sure don't guess and possibly lead the listener astray, read the abbreviation instead
- Volume number of journal, maybe in italics, bold-faced or underlined
- Number of that portion of the volume if the journal is published more than once a year
- Year of publication
- Pages on which the article appears

An example:

Milgram, S., "Behavioural Study of Obedience", J Abnormal Soc. Psychol., 67,4; 371-378, (1972).

This would be read:

"Milgram, capital M-i-l-g-r-a-m, S., 'Behavioural Study of Obedience' in the journal of Abnormal Social Psychology, Volume 67, Number 4, pages 371 to 378, 1972."

9 Positioning of information

Footnotes

You can either incorporate footnotes into the text or just read the footnote numbers as you go through the text and put the notes themselves on a separate recording. If you incorporate the notes, then you should state when you start a note, and when you go back to the text; if you put the notes separately ensure that the notes version is properly labelled and announced.

Exercises and problems

These are usually read where they occur in the text, with the answers following immediately after each question. They are often printed in a separate part of the book, to ensure that the sighted student does not inadvertently read them before the problem has been tackled. Listeners to audio have no such problem, so just be sure to say "Answer" and leave a few seconds pause to enable the listener to stop the recording before reading the answer itself.

Tables, graphs and diagrams

These are usually printed at the point most convenient to the typesetters, but they should be read at the most appropriate point in the text. This is usually when first mentioned or at the end of the textual summary. Always finish the sentence before launching into your description.

Comment: Always ask yourself whether the diagram is necessary. Often the information is already included in the text and the description of the diagram would only confuse things.

10 Final quality checks

If possible, get someone who has never seen the print version to listen to the recording and then to check with the original to make

sure their understanding was correct and that the recording had not been ambiguous or misleading.

Exercises have shown that even on a one-to-one basis and using simple diagrams, the verbal transmission of information can seem more like a game of Chinese Whispers. With practice, and with imagination, you will soon begin to foresee potential hazards and will be able to make your recordings much more usable.

Rest assured however that as a reader, you will never run out of challenges, which is probably why you enjoy doing it!

11 Common abbreviations

The following is a list of the most common abbreviations and how to read them:

a/c	account
c or ca	about
cf	compare
cmnd	command
c/o	care of
e.g.	for example
et al	et al or & others
etc	"et setera"
et seq	& following
f or ff	& following
g	grams
h	hour
Hz	Hertz
ibid	"ibid" (short "i"s)
kHz	kilohertz

l	litre
loc cit	"lock sit"
MS	manuscript
m	metre
m ²	metre squared
m ³	metre cubed
mg	milligrams
mg/l	milligrams per litre
µg	micrograms
MHz	megahertz
MSS	manuscripts
n	note
n/a	not applicable
NB	"en bee" meaning nota bene
nn	notes
Ω	Ohm
op cit	"op sit"
p or pp	pages
s	second
s	section
s4(1)	section 4 subsection 1
W	Watt
V	Volt
viz	namely

12 Common symbols

The following is a list of common symbols and how to read them:

<	less than
>	greater than
≤	less than or equal to
≥	greater than or equal to
≠	not equal to
≡	identical to or equivalent to
±	plus or minus
∴	therefore
∵	because
∞	infinity
°	degree
χ ²	chi squared (pronounced "kigh")
/	slash
\	backslash
§	section
¶	para
&	ampersand
#	in American texts, number
†	single dagger
‡	double dagger
®	registered
©	copyright
@	at or each

- \$ dollar
- ¥ Yen
- * asterisk/star
- dot dot dot

13 Roman numerals

The letters used in Roman notation are I, V, X, L, C, D and M. Repeating a letter repeats its value. A letter placed after one of greater value adds to it. A letter placed before one of greater value subtracts from it.

Any number of thousands is expressed by a line drawn over any numeral less than one thousand. So \overline{V} denotes 5,000, \overline{LX} denotes 60,000, \overline{M} is one million and \overline{MM} is two million.

I	1	L	50
II	2	LX	60
III	3	LXX	70
IV	4	LXXX	80
V	5	XC	90
VI	6	C	100
VII	7	CC	200
VIII	8	CCC	300
IX	9	CD	400
X	10	D	500
XI	11	DC	600
XII	12	CM	900
XIII	13	M	1,000
XIV	14	MM	2,000

XV	15	MMM	3,000
XX	20	IV	4,000
XXI	21	V	5,000
XXV	25	X	10,000
XXX	30	C	100,000
XL	40	M	1,000,000

14 Greek alphabet

The following list shows Greek symbols, their names and how they should be pronounced.

A	α	alpha	a as in cat
B	β	beta (beeta)	b as in book
G	γ	gamma	g as in good
Δ	δ	delta	d as in door
E	ε	epsilon	e as in bed
Z	ζ	zeta (zeeta)	dz as in goods
H	η	eta (eeta)	ay as in say
θ	θ	theta (theeta)	th as in theme
I	ι	iota	i as in ink
K	κ	kappa	
Λ	λ	lambda	
M	μ	mu (mew)	
N	ν	nu (new)	
Ξ	ξ	xi (ksigh)	cks as in tricks
O	ο	omicron (omycron/omikron)	o as in on

Π	π	pi (pie)	
P	ρ	rho (roe)	
Σ	σ	sigma	
T	τ	tau (taw either as in cow or in tore)	
Υ	υ	upsilon (upsilon/upsylon)	
Φ	φ	phi (figh)	ph as in physio
X	χ	chi (kigh)	
Ψ	ψ	psi (psigh)	ps as in lips
Ω	ω	omega	o as in stone

15 Internet language

When reading web addresses or emails, read the address in full first, then read all the letters individually and deliberately, with the punctuation read as words. It is very important that this information is given correctly.

/ forward slash

\ back slash

~ tilde

hash

: colon

_ underscore

. dot

@ at

- hyphen

Example: <http://freenet.buffalo.edu/~wnydf/library/localcomp.txt>

Read as:

h t t p colon forward slash forward slash f r e e n e t dot b u f f a l o
dot e d u forward slash tilde w n y d f forward slash l i b r a r y
forward slash l o c a l c o m p dot t x t

Finally, read a blank space as "space".

16 Where to get further help

UKAAF assists businesses and organisations by advising how to meet the needs of customers and clients with print disabilities; providing guidance on how to source and provide quality accessible formats like large print, audio, braille, electronic file formats and Easy Read; and helping you to understand your responsibilities as a service provider.

Through our website and magazine, members will also gain access to:

- findings from public consultations and end-user research
- research and innovation in accessible formats
- information on suppliers of transcription services
- guidance and advice on standards for accessible formats
- opportunities to review and help to develop standards and guidance.

In addition to supporting service providers and transcribers, UKAAF also represents people with print disabilities. We believe that because format quality matters, end-users should have genuine input into the development of standards for accessible information. By collecting and sharing users' views with service providers and transcribers we can help them to deliver a quality service which meets users' needs.

UKAAF has a User Advisory Group (UAG) so we can include blind and partially sighted people and others with print disabilities in

ongoing research and consultation on key accessible format issues.

There are many benefits of being a member of UKAAF, not least to demonstrate your commitment to quality accessible formats. For more information visit us at www.ukaaf.org.

17 Your feedback is welcome

We would welcome your views on this guidance, any suggestions for additions, or case studies of how this guidance has helped you. You might like to share your experience in an article in our magazine 'Format Matters'.

You can phone, email or write to us - our details are at the back, or use the feedback form on our website www.ukaaf.org.

If you find UKAAF's guidance valuable, please encourage others to join by visiting our website.

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UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF)

Contact details

UKAAF

c/o Pia, Unit 42 John Baker Close

Llantarnam Industrial Park

Cwmbrân NP44 3AW

Tel: 0345 60 85223

Fax: 0345 60 85224

Email: enquiries@ukaaf.org

Web: www.ukaaf.org

Registered address

UKAAF

c/o Pia, Unit 42 John Baker Close

Llantarnam Industrial Park

Cwmbrân NP44 3AW

President: Lord Low of Dalston CBE

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