

**Pennsylvania High School  
Speech League**



**NEWS  
BROADCASTING  
HANDBOOK**

**Revised: March, 2019**

**Contents**

News Broadcasting - Description of Event .....3  
Article B16 –News Broadcasting.....4  
Procedures Used at the State Tournament ..... 6  
Sample News Broadcasting Script.....7  
Ten Suggestions for Preparing Students for News Broadcasting.....9  
News Broadcasting Tips .....10

FORMS can be found in the FORMS SECTION of the PHSSL webpage:

- News Broadcasting - Master Ballot
- News Broadcasting - Critique Sheet

# NEWS BROADCASTING

## **Description of Event**

The event of News Broadcasting is open to all PHSSL schools, and every member is invited to participate. This event is held on the State level only, and there is no qualifying procedure except for registering. Description of News Broadcasting is in Article B16, PHSSL Bylaws. Every member school may enter one pair of students in News Broadcasting. There is no charge for name changes in Impromptu, News Broadcasting and Student Congress. A \$50.00 nuisance fee will be assessed for drops.

Students who participated in PHSSL District and/or Regional Tournaments and who did not qualify to the State Tournament may be entered in News Broadcasting.

To register students in News Broadcasting, the coach completes the registration form by the stated deadline. No registrations will be accepted after the deadline date.

## Article B16 – News Broadcasting

### Section B16.1

A school may enter one pair of students in News Broadcasting. No charge for name changes in News Broadcasting. A \$50.00 nuisance fee will be assessed for drops.

### Section B16.2

There shall be only a state contest in News Broadcasting.

### Section B16.3

All entrants are required to prepare three (3) broadcast scripts that are three minutes in length and are to be delivered while seated.

- A. A newscast focusing on international events.
- B. A newscast focusing on national news events.
- C. A newscast focusing on the “lighter side” of the news.

Those entrants who do not have a prepared script for a given round will be disqualified from that round.

### Section B16.4

- A. Round I. Each pair of students will read a three-minute prepared newscast focusing on international news events. The reading of the script should be balanced between the two students. The script is prepared by the students covering international events of the time period Sunday two weeks prior to the State Tournament through Round I of the State Tournament.
- B. Round II. Each pair of students will read a three-minute prepared newscast focusing on the “lighter side” of the news. The script is prepared by the students covering the lighter side of the news of the time period Sunday two weeks prior to the State Tournament through Round I of the State Tournament.
- C. Quarterfinal Round. Students will read a three-minute prepared newscast focusing on national news events (sports news may also be included in this national news script). The script is prepared by the students covering national events of the time period Sunday two weeks prior to the State Tournament through Round I of the State Tournament.

Selection for the Quarterfinal Round will be based on the approximately 24 lowest cumulative ranks from Rounds I and II.

- D. Semifinal Round. Fifteen minutes before the contestants are to appear in the round, they shall be given a copy of a broadcast script provided by the Executive Director. This sight reading will concentrate on national news events and Pennsylvania news, but not exclusively one or the other. This script is not to be edited.

Semifinal Round selection will be based on the lowest rank totals of the top three teams in each Quarterfinal Round room.

- E. Final Round. Approximately six teams will be selected to compete in a Final Round. Twenty minutes before appearing in the round, the student shall be given a four-minute script provided by the Executive Director which may be a combination of national and world news, sports, and weather. The script must be cut to three minutes for presentation.

#### Section 16.5

Fabrication of news stories is prohibited and will result in a team being disqualified from the tournament.

#### Section 16.6

The teams may receive assistance from a pronouncing guide, but may not seek the help of any other person. Failure to abide by this rule will result in disqualification from the tournament.

#### Section 16.7

The names of the contestants shall be sent to the Office of the Executive Director no later than the deadline date set in the League's calendar.

#### Section 16.8

The PHSSL News Broadcasting Handbook is to be considered a part of the PHSSL Constitution and Bylaws. Therefore, all Constitutional provisions are applicable to the Handbook.

## Procedures Used at the State Tournament

Since many students are competing in this event for the first time at the State Tournament, the following list of procedures may give you an idea of the way this event is conducted. A few suggestions are also included.

1. After registration, a mandatory meeting of all news broadcasting contestants is held to go over any last minute changes. This meeting also involves a very important role call. The procedures are reviewed, and students may ask questions about any aspect of the competition. This is a big help to most students, as they will be responsible for finding these facilities for each round.
2. Make sure that teams report at least 20 minutes before they are scheduled to compete. Times are available at registration.
3. Each team must have his/her own scripts for the three different topic areas as listed in the rules of the Broadcasting event. Students will also be asked to fill out copies of the ballot.
4. The Semifinal and Final Round are sight-reading scripts, prepared by the PHSSL staff. The purpose of these rounds is to determine the student's ability to read aloud a script after minimal preparation. These scripts are typical examples of ones that would be read on the air. Approximately fifteen seconds are available for sign-on, segues (transitions), and sign-off.
5. Check the time and place for each sight-reading. Teams should report to the room at least 20 minutes before they are scheduled to compete. **IT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT THAT TEAMS ARE NOT LATE FOR THESE ROUNDS-LATENESS WILL RESULT IN LOSS OF PREP TIME.**
6. Teams may want to bring a stop watch or digital watch with you to the sight-readings. Although the scripts are written with the three-minute time limit in mind (Semifinal Round) and three-minute time limit (Final Round), teams may want to allow for sign-on, sign-off, and brief transition lines. The scripts themselves should not be altered in any way, except for the Final Round script which must be cut to three minutes.
7. Teams will be given scripts approximately fifteen minutes before their scheduled "air time," (20 minutes before air time in Final Round). During this preparation period, teams can edit the script (e.g.-- add a sign-on, transition lines, sign-off and cutting to three minutes in the Final Round). However, teams should not make any other changes (e.g.-- adding their own news story into the script).
8. On Saturday morning, all contestants should report to the room listed in the program for the announcement of the quarterfinalists. **MAKE SURE YOU ATTEND THIS ASSEMBLY.** A few times in the past years, chosen students did not compete in the round because they did not attend this meeting.
9. The final round is another sight-reading and is conducted in a similar manner as the Semifinal Round. The final round is held immediately after the semifinal round.
10. In all rounds a 15-second grace period, both under (2:45) and over (3:15) on time is given to all students with no penalty. If a team is 16 to 30 seconds over or under, it cannot place first but may rank 2-7. If a team is more than 30 seconds over or under, it cannot place in the top 7. Students are ranked 1 through 7. All others are ranked 8.

## **Sample Script (a two minute script; news broadcasting requires three minute scripts)**

HERE IS THE LATEST NEWS...

THE U-S AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL SAYS ISRAELI, PALESTINIAN AND U-S NEGOTIATORS HAVE REACHED A TENTATIVE AGREEMENT OVER A STANDOFF INVOLVING GAZA'S BORDER CROSSINGS.

AMBASSADOR RICHARD JONES SAYS THE STANDOFF HAS CAUSED SEVERE SHORTAGES OF BREAD, MILK, AND OTHER ESSENTIALS IN GAZA.

ISRAEL CLOSED THE KARNI (KAR'-NEE) BORDER CROSSING FOR ALMOST TWO MONTHS BECAUSE OF WHAT IT CALLED SECURITY CONCERNS. JONES SAYS ALL SIDES INVOLVED HAVE AGREED TO OPEN ANOTHER CROSSING, KEREM SHALOM (KEH'-REM, SHAH'-LOAM) AT THE CONVERGENCE OF GAZA, ISRAEL, AND EGYPT. JONES SAYS CARGO TRAFFIC MIGHT START FLOWING TOMORROW.

MEANWHILE, U-S AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ ZALMAY KHALILZAD (Z AHL'-MAY KAH-LEEL'-Z AHD) SAYS DISCUSSIONS ARE UNDERWAY ABOUT WHEN HE WOULD MEET WITH IRANIAN OFFICIALS.

HE TELLS THE ASSOCIATED PRESS THAT THE TALKS WITH IRAN SHOULD ONLY BE ABOUT IRAQ AND THAT THE TALKS SHOULD NOT BE HELD IN BAQUBA (BAH-KOO'-BAH), TEHRAN, FALLUJAH (FAH-LOO'-JAH), OR TIKRIT (TEEK-REET'), BUT RATHER IN BAGHDAD.

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION HAS SAID IT WILL DISCUSS THE IRAQ REBELLION WITH IRAN, BUT NOT THAT NATION'S SUSPECTED NUCLEAR PROGRAM.

THE U-S SAYS IRAN IS MEDDLING IN IRAQ, AND PRESIDENT BUSH HAS SAID SOME ROADSIDE BOMBS CONTAIN IRANIAN COMPONENTS.

KHALILZAD SAYS HE HAD NEVER WRITTEN TO OR SPOKEN WITH IRANIAN OFFICIALS ABOUT THE TALKS AND SAYS A DECISION ON WHEN THEY'LL OCCUR IS "STILL BEING DISCUSSED.

FINALLY, CHRONIC HEARTBURN APPEARS TO BE FUELING ESOPHAGEAL CANCER. SOME 3 MILLION AMERICANS ARE THOUGHT TO HAVE A TYPE OF ESOPHAGUS DAMAGE FROM SEVERE ACID REFLUX THAT PUTS THEM AT INCREASED RISK FOR THE DEADLY CANCER — AND NEW RESEARCH IS EXPLORING WHETHER IT'S POSSIBLE TO ZAP AWAY THAT DAMAGE AND BLOCK THE CANCER FROM EVER FORMING.

MANY AMERICANS HAVE WHAT IS KNOWN AS "GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE" OR GE-R-D, IN WHICH A LOOSE VALVE IN THE STOMACH ALLOWS STOMACH ACID TO EAT AWAY AT THE ESOPHAGUS. WHEN THE ACID KILLS CELLS IN THE ESOPHAGEAL LINING, THE MUSCLE HEALS ITSELF WITH NEW CELLS, WHICH ARE MORE CANCER-PRONE.

IT'S A CONDITION CALLED BARRETT'S ESOPHAGUS. BARRETT'S SUFFERERS ARE AT LEAST 30 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO DEVELOP ESOPHAGEAL CANCER.

GASTROENTEROLOGISTS AROUND THE WORLD ARE MAKING STRIDES TO CURB THE PROLIFERATION OF THIS CANCER.

LAST YEAR, THE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION APPROVED A DEVICE THAT SNAKES A BALLOON INSIDE A PERSON'S ESOPHAGUS TO EAT AWAY AT THE BARRETT'S TISSUE.

OTHER PREVENTATIVE OPTIONS INCLUDE FREEZING THE BARRETT'S TISSUE, PHOTODYNAMIC THERAPY, OR CUTTING OUT THE TISSUE VIA ENDOSCOPY (EN-DAH-S' -KUH-PEE).



## Ten Suggestions for Preparing Students for News Broadcasting

Originally written for Radio Announcing by Janet Dicenso

Adapted for News Broadcasting by Beth Young

1. After selecting the students who will compete in News Broadcasting, tell them to watch and listen carefully to two or three minute news spots on a variety of television stations. They should use their observations in planning and writing their three minute prepared script.
2. At least two weeks before the contest, they should read newspapers and magazines for interesting ideas or events that they may want to include as their "soft news story" or "public service" segment. Remember that the news must be taken from events that happen the Sunday through the Thursday before the tournament. However, contrary to some opinion, the entire script can be prepared before leaving for the State Tournament. This allows for the students to practice and become familiar with it.
3. Everyone should be familiar with the rules of the event. The final copy of each of the three prepared scripts must be ready by the time your school registers on the day of the tournament.
4. The students should include their names (but not the school) as part of the sign-on. Remember that many professionals agree that the lead story is the most important part of the broadcast because it grabs the attention of the listener.
5. The students should keep their audience in mind as they write the prepared scripts. The audience (judges) hears the script, they rely upon the students to be clear and precise in their language. The sentences should be varied (but mostly simple, not complex or complicated; the script relatively cliché-free; and direct quotations should be written in an easy-to-understand manner (e.g. "quote/unquote"). Journalism requires that the broadcast be honest, accurate, and fair. Finally, most news is written in the present tense. Consult one of the accompanying references for other suggestions. VISUAL
6. The students should compose an interesting sign-off for their broadcasts. They should include their names and station call-letters.
7. The students should practice reading aloud often. This may also be the best way to prepare for the sight-reading scripts. They should mark their scripts for pause and emphasis. Preparation for the events helps them to sound more confident and relaxed.
8. The students should maintain a conversational tone while reading their scripts.
9. The students should practice reading aloud names in the current news. This may help them with some of the "tongue twisters" that they may encounter in the sight-reading script.
10. The coach should acquaint the students with a few relaxation and "stretching" exercises. These may be very helpful on the day of the tournament.

## **Radio Announcing Tips**

**(Please apply, as appropriate, to your News Broadcasting experience)**

by  
Kelley L. Phillips  
Audio Production Assistant  
WPSX-TV

As with any speech-related activity, there are some people who show a natural talent for radio announcing and there are those who have to work very hard to attain that “natural” style. This article is written primarily for those in the latter category, to help them gain a better sense of what makes a good radio announcer. I use the term “sense” because there is no such thing as a list of checkpoints that, when each point is checked, necessarily produces a good announcer.

It may encourage you to know that most professional announcers make it a point to continually monitor what the “competition” is doing: Are they doing something during their announcing that could work well for me? Is there something they use that doesn’t work and I should try to avoid? The point here is that what “works” in radio is constantly changing. You need not feel you must sound exactly like a Paul Harvey or a Wolfman Jack to be a successful announcer. I would, however, suggest you do some “monitoring of the competition” to gain a few pointers.

Before you try to write your own radio script, try this little experiment. Choose a newscaster on one of your local radio stations and tape approximately three minutes of one of the better newscasts. Write down the exact words the newscaster uses in script form. Then, you play the newscast, reading the script and taping it. Go back and make comparisons. Was your newscast longer or shorter? Did you stumble over a few words? Did it sound like you were reading from a script, or like you were talking to a group of people?

This should begin to give you a feel for what works and what doesn’t. Try adjusting your pitch and rate to make the newscast the same length of time as the newscaster’s. You may find yourself out of breath, or you may find yourself making an effort to slow down. Make notes on your comparisons and use the guidelines in the rest of the article to help you work with any problems, or incorporate what works into your own script and delivery.

The rest of this article will be divided into three sections --- (1) preparation of script, (2) delivery techniques, and (3) studio techniques. It is important to remember that these are all interrelated; a good script is nothing if the delivery is poor, and beautiful delivery is worthless if the mic was not handled properly and the audience couldn’t understand the words.

### Scripts

Perhaps the most important point here is to write in a conversational style. Even if yours is a hard news report, stiff, research-paper English is a no-no. You want to be conversational, but not chatty. Conversational means easy to listen to and easy to comprehend--it does not mean poor grammar (double negatives, leaving the "g" off words ending in -ing, etc.). Avoid colloquialisms.

Remember the importance of time. You may have wondered why I suggested you try to match the newscaster's time in the earlier experiment. The point is that no matter how much or how little news there is, the broadcast scheduled allows a prescribed amount of time for the newscast, particularly on large, all-news stations. You must use all that time, or only that amount of time, to do your newscast, or you will throw off the station's schedule. This is why the Speech League competition sets a very strict time limit on your newscasts. With that in mind, then you write your script, don't give yourself more than you can handle in the allotted time. Consider your newscast to be an update, not the full-blown noon edition. Include, for instance, a local story or two, and a national story of major

importance; perhaps a weather forecast, and maybe a few scores "from the ballpark." While you don't want to put in too much, don't go to the other extreme and include too little so you can leisurely deliver your newscast--this easy way out will be all too obvious to the judges, and will do nothing to improve your announcing skills.

When writing your stories, it is often helpful to keep in mind the "5 W's": Who, What, When, Where, and Why. If you limit yourself to answering these questions, you will generally be able to give your listener adequate information without becoming chatty or losing their attention.

Use transitional lines to link stories of similar content: "While taxes are a problem here in Anytown, they're also giving Congress a difficult time. Today on Capitol Hill..." Little phrases (e.g., "And on the national scene...", "And now the latest from the nation's ballparks...", etc.) also help to make the jump from various stories a little easier. Basically, just remember to keep it sharp and concise.

### Delivery of Newscast

If you are like most people, you probably found you took longer to read the newscast in the experiment than did the newscaster. While we don't realize it, most radio personalities speak much more quickly than the average person, in an effort to get across as much information as possible in as short a time as possible. Your task is to discover how quickly you can speak and still keep your message clear, your pitch acceptable, and not overload your audience with information. These things together are all part of interpretation: how you emphasize certain phrases, when you pause to let the information sink in or to signal a change in topic, etc. Everyone has a different method of interpretation with the same hoped-for result: to make information stick in the listener's minds. Again, there is no hard and fast rule--it's whatever works for you.

Pitch is another factor that contributes greatly to overall effectiveness. It can be terribly annoying if it jumps around to try to project enthusiasm; it can be equally as annoying if it doesn't change at all to help the listener clue in to important information or topic change.

No matter what pitch you use, strive to make it one of confidence. Walter Cronkite, CBS's long-time news anchorman, was once voted "America's most-trusted individual." This high accolade had a great deal to do with his delivery: confident, authoritative yet still personable, and consistent.

You may find it difficult to sound confident and authoritative when you come upon foreign names you know you don't know how to pronounce. Don't worry about exact pronunciation (if and only if there is no feasible way for you to discover the correct pronunciation); say the word the best you can, then use that pronunciation throughout the newscast. Rehearse. There is nothing worse than stumbling over it or saying it slowly in an attempt to get the proper pronunciation; this only draws attention to the mistake. This is a good rule to follow whenever you falter on words. Unless it is critical information (e.g., a specific number, an incorrect identification), it is better to glaze over the error rather than to go back and draw attention to it.

### Studio Technique

These are a few things you may want to keep in mind:

--Noise of any kind is very audible. Do not ... rattle your script, or move your chair. You may want to remove any jewelry (bracelets, cuff links, etc.) that may either scrape on the table or jangle together or somehow produce noise.

--Write on your script: your introduction, transitions, etc. You will probably be nervous and whatever you can write down and not commit to memory will help. Many people tend to rewrite difficult-to-pronounce names in a form they can pronounce over the original, and cross out the original to avoid stumbling over it. Some people write cues to their script (e.g., "Slow here," "Serious here"). Be careful, however, of writing too much on the script and getting yourself confused.

You will probably be nervous, particularly if this is your first attempt at broadcasting. Don't let it worry you - even professionals get butterflies. It's the waiting right before "air time" that will be most difficult; the actual newscast will be a lot easier than you expected. Who knows--if you're not careful you might even enjoy your moment in the spotlight!