WRITING AROUND SOUND tips:  **ACTUALITY STORIES**

(Also good for Wrappers and for writing around sound in radio packages/closer looks.)

When using actualities (sound bites), follow broadcast news writing rules. However there are a few additional rules, listed below:

An actuality story is usually **3-sentences**. The usual “hard lead” followed by the **lead into the actuality**, and then the **lead out** (sentence after the actuality.)

--- **THE LEAD:** Just like any other news story, start with a **good, hard lead** that follows all lead rules.

--- **THE LEAD-IN:** (Do not confuse this with the lead to your story. The lead-in is the **sentence right before the actuality**.)

- It should be a complete sentence.
- It should start in some way **identify the speaker**.
- It should **prepare the listener** for what will be heard in the actuality. However, it should **not point to the actuality**, and it should not **echo (not repeat)** anything that will be **heard in the actuality**.
- It should be **able to stand alone**. If the actuality was not there or did not play, this sentence (and the entire story) should still make perfect sense, and the audience should not be able to tell that there was supposed to be sound.

--- **THE ACTUALLY:** (THE SOUND BITE)

- It should be between **10 and 20 seconds**, and must be **quality sound**. It is supposed to enhance your story, not distract from it and not make you sound unprofessional. It must add to the story, not be just sound for sound sake.
- The sound must have a **purpose** and must **forward your story**. It should be content better said by the source than by the reporter.

--- **THE LEAD OUT** (also called the **TRANSITION OUT**): (THE SENTENCE AFTER THE ACTUALITY.)

- It should be a complete sentence.
- It should logically follow what was said in the actuality.
- It is usually the last sentence of a news story, so it should be a logical ending.
- It should not echo (repeat) anything that was heard in the actuality or anything that was said previously in the story.
- It should not “point” to the actuality.
- It should, in some way, **again refer to the speaker** heard in the actuality. (Usually you re-identify the speaker in a statement that adds something else the person said.)... You do NOT use the word “also.” The word “says” may be used again.
- It should be **able to stand alone**. If the actuality was not there or did not play, this sentence (and the entire story) should still make perfect sense, and the audience should not be able to tell that there was supposed to be sound.

--- **THE STORY:** --- Keep it **simple and short**. --- Write the story like any other news story.

- Usually, you follow the hard lead with a lead-in to the actuality.
- After the actuality, write just one more sentence (the transition out).
- Never echo (never repeat) anything in the actuality.
- The entire story (all of the actual writing) must be able to stand alone, without the sound, if necessary.

--- **THE FORMAT:** Type it, with the proper heading.

- Write your lead and the sentences leading up to the actuality like you would any other news story.
- Skip some space and then in large, dark brackets, type the following actuality info, centered, and on 3 lines:
  - **SLUG:** the last name of the speaker “on” a one word topic
  - **IN:** the “in” is the first 3 words of the actuality
  - **TIME:** the length (time) of the actuality
  - **OUT:** the “out” is the last 3 words of the actuality
- Skips some space and then write the rest of your story (the transition out).

--- **EXAMPLE:**

**The Facts:** It is the first day of school at West Windsor-Plainsboro High Schools. Most parents in the district seem to be thrilled about kids going back to school; most students seem to be unhappy about going back to school. School Superintendent Dr. Robert Loretan, in an interview with our station, discussed the first day.

**The Actuality:** (what is on the 20 second sound bite from Dr. Robert Loretan): **"We consider every day to be crucial, so all teachers will give assignments today. We will get off to a fast start. Students better come to school prepared to work."**

--- **BAD EXAMPLE:**

West Windsor-Plainsboro High Schools are starting a new school year today. Superintendent Dr. Victoria Kniewel (knee--you--ELL) says this:

Kniewel on 1st day  
In: “We consider every…”  
:20  
Out: “…prepared to work.”

Kniewel (knee--you--ELL) warns students to come prepared to work.

--- **BETTER EXAMPLE:**

West Windsor-Plainsboro High Schools are starting a new school year today. Superintendent Dr. Victoria Kniewel (knee--you—ELL) says education is a priority, even on day one:

Kniewel on 1st day  
In: “We consider every…”  
:20  
Out: “…prepared to work.”

Kniewel (knee--you--ELL) says she’s anticipating a great year.