

Tips on writing for the ear

- Before you write it, tell it.
- Always think about the audience. Will they know what certain terms or expressions mean? Do they need context to understand the conversation, question, or anecdote?
- Short, declarative sentences.
- One sentence = one thought.
- Conversational words and sentence structures.
- Active Voice.
- Limit introductory and interior clauses.
- Reduce wordiness: get rid of all those little extra words that don't add to the meaning of the sentence.
- Keep subjects and verbs near each other.
- Use contractions.
- Limit how many numbers are used and those that are used, keep simple.
- Write visually: describe what listeners can't see.
- Use all of your senses (sight-touch-smell-taste;hearing) and emotions (tension-happiness-anger-frustration-joy).
- Use strong verbs and nouns and specific description adjectives (i.e. instead of “a large crowd,” use “a crowd of two-hundred”).
- Don't crowd a sentence with too many adjectives.
- Consider which details listeners need to understand the story, i.e. if something happened on October 2, 1995, is the year enough to get the point across?
- Make sure the audience always knows who is speaking if you use sound clips from someone else.
- Use attribution for the source of information when needed.
- Always read your copy out loud to see how it sounds to the ear.



Caption: Joshua Chang, USC student. (Photo by:

Willa Seidenberg)

