

# Using Radio

Communicating effectively with the public is a crucial part of any election administrator's job. One of the most cost effective options is radio, which is readily available and reaches an overwhelming majority of Americans.

## WHY RADIO?

- ♦ It is an easy, low-cost way to communicate with a wide audience. More than 80% of Americans listen to broadcast radio in a given week.<sup>1</sup>
- ♦ Radio can also help you reach a more targeted audience such as non-English speakers.
- ♦ Radio allows you to connect with listeners in a direct and more intimate way than print or TV. You can reach listeners where they are—at home, in their car, outside, at work.
- ♦ In some communities, especially rural ones, radio can be a resident's only source for local news and information.
- ♦ In a disaster or emergency, radio might be the only way to communicate vital information to voters.

## TO START

- ♦ Think about your main message. What information are you trying to communicate? What are you trying to achieve?
- ♦ Who is your audience—all voters or targeted groups such as first-time voters? The answer could determine which station you work with.
- ♦ Who is the best messenger? It might be you, or possibly someone else in your office or community who can better connect with listeners.

## RADIO OPTIONS

- ♦ You can be interviewed for a news story or pitch a story to a local station.
- ♦ You might be invited to be a guest on a talk show or part of a longer discussion.
- ♦ You could buy an ad or produce your own public service announcement (PSA).

## CRAFT YOUR MESSAGE

### Make it simple and direct.

Listeners are bombarded with information; you want yours to stand out. Don't overwhelm people with facts, numbers or concepts. Radio listeners cannot go back and reread information they missed or did not understand. You have one shot to make your point.

### Choose your words carefully.

Make your sentences short and straightforward. Air time is limited so every word counts. Avoid jargon or technical information. Avoid clichés like the plague.

### Be personal.

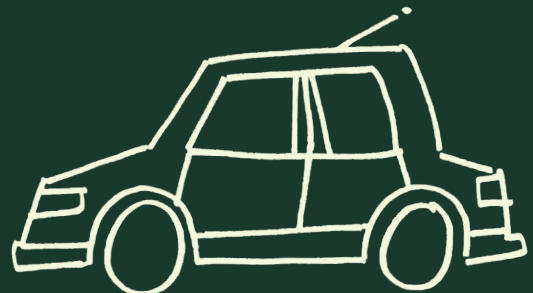
Pretend you are having a conversation with a friend or relative. Share information you believe is important and that listeners will want to know. Be sincere. Express enthusiasm. It's the human connection that will make your message stick.

### Prepare, but not too much.

Know your facts and the main points you want to make. Jot down a few notes if you're worried about forgetting something in an interview. Avoid using rehearsed sound bites that can wipe away the sincerity you hope to achieve.

### Produce an ad.

For these, you will need to prepare. But again, not too much. Even reading a script, talk as though you are chatting with a friend. Practice reading it aloud to make sure the words come naturally. If they don't, rewrite the script. Use simple sentences and everyday language. Underline anything you want to emphasize. Drink warm (or, better, hot) water, take a deep breath and relax before you start. Remember, you can rerecord if you make a mistake or do not like the way it sounds. It is not live radio.



<sup>1</sup><https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/audio-and-podcasting/>

# ADDITIONAL TIPS

## NEWS STORIES

If a reporter approaches you for an interview, find out what the story is about so you can provide the most useful information. Be honest. If you don't know the answer or need time to find out, say that. Explain when you might have the information the reporter needs or refer the reporter to someone who has the information.

If you have an idea for a story, you can pitch it to a radio station with a news staff. Be sure you can explain why the story is important and timely, and how you can help with coverage. You might invite a reporter to your office to see the operation firsthand so they can better understand how elections work. Sound is very important for radio, so offer options, such as audio from a poll worker training class or the tabulator noise.

It is always helpful to have a good relationship with local reporters in advance. They will trust you to give them helpful, accurate information and good story tips. You can trust them to come to you to get the story right.

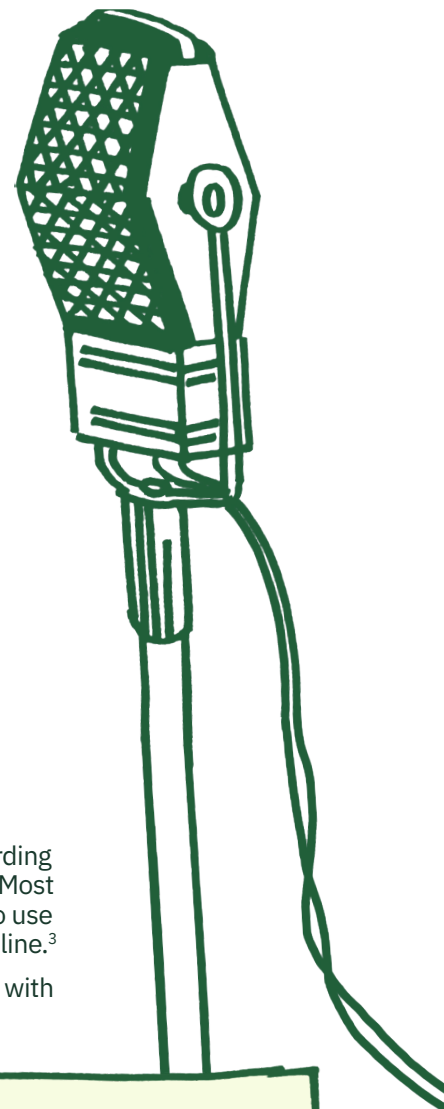
## PAID ADS AND PSAs

Consider radio ads if you have a specific message and want to maintain control of the content. Ads on radio stations aimed at certain demographics can be an especially good way to reach non-English speaking or other special interest voter groups. Paid radio ads are relatively inexpensive. They range from \$25 to about \$1,500 for a 30-second spot, depending on the size of the market.<sup>2</sup>

Your other option is producing a PSA, which is generally free. The downside is that you lose control over when and where it will air.

Whichever option you choose, follow the same principles. Focus on one key message. The wording should be simple and direct, but also conversational and read with sincerity and enthusiasm. Most radio ads will be produced against suitable background music. For example, you might want to use upbeat music to encourage people to register to vote. You can find many examples of PSAs online.<sup>3</sup>

Contact your local radio station to find out what they want in a PSA and whether they can help with production. You can also hire a professional ad firm or find one that provides pro bono help.



Here's an example of how print and radio writing differ:

### ACTUAL 2024 PRESS RELEASE:

"The State Board of Elections (SBE) today announced that the first phase of the 2024 General Election mail-in ballots are being sent to registered voters who requested them, starting September 20. Over 578,000 ballots are being mailed and over 91,000 are being delivered via the web. For ballots sent by mail, it is expected that voters will receive their ballot within five days. Voters can still request mail-in ballots. To receive a mail-in ballot by mail, your request must be received (not just mailed) by October 29. The deadline to request a web delivery mail-in ballot is November 1. Visit SBE's mail-in ballot webpage for more information."<sup>4</sup>

### REWRITTEN FOR RADIO:

"If you requested a mail-in ballot to use in the November election, you should get it very soon. The state just sent out more than a half million by mail. Thousands more are being delivered online. If you want to use a mail-in ballot, but haven't requested one yet, you still have time. The deadline is October 29th to have it mailed to you; November 1st to get it online. You can also check out the state election website for more details."

<sup>2</sup> <https://fitsmallbusiness.com/radio-advertising-costs/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://psaconnect.c360m.com/AllRadio.php>; <https://www.nab.org/coronavirus/radio.asp>.

<sup>4</sup> This example excerpt is from a [press release](#) distributed on September 19, 2024.