

What kind of spoken word radio do I want to make?

There are many styles of spoken word radio. Some of which involve more fact-checking, production, and research (i.e. news), while others may be more casual (i.e. a discussion-based show). All spoken word shows involve some prep, so out of respect to your listeners, always think about how to present your content in the best possible format.

Do I want to produce....**News**?

If you want to produce quick headlines and keep on top of what's happening around you, try news! It's fun, fast-paced, often in a team environment, and will get you in touch with a lot of happenings around town. Be prepared to research and fact-check your items, and put the work into keeping your content up-to-date, relevant, factual, informative, and as balanced as humanly possible.

That sounds like a lot of work, maybe I want to try....**Discussion**?

This can be a less formal, but equally fun way to approach radio. You'll want to have an angle or focus for your show (i.e. film, bike culture, local politics), and you'll want to have people other than you to discuss this topic (one-person monologue shows are super boring and terrible), as well as some sort of outline so that your discussion has structure. You should still research your topic, but you are free to present opinions in a way that you can't with news.

Or maybe I just want to **interview** some people about some things?

Great! Interview-based shows should have an angle or focus as well, but you can present longer pieces, allow people to tell personal stories, and dig deeper into your topic than you would on a news show.

No, actually. I think I want to spend a lot of time in a small room editing my clips into a really flashy **documentary**.

Way to be ambitious! Documentaries are incredibly rewarding, and have the ability to pull listeners into a whole new world. BUT they take a million trillion hours to make, so be aware that making a documentary will likely leave you with a shadow of your former social life, and involve learning some new editing tricks. It's worth it, but be prepared to spend about an hour of your time for every minute of documentary you make.

How about an hour-long weekly **rant** in which I tell people what I think about the world?

No. Just no.

I want to do something really **controversial** and arty that might offend some people.

Great. Before you do that, please read the entire [CAB Code of Ethics](#), which we are all held to as Canadian broadcasters, and also the section below on Controversial Content and Watershed Hours. Then approach the Program Manager with your idea. As broadcasters, we are held to a higher standard of accountability than print journalists, so unfortunately we have to be a bit more careful. Why? Because anybody can tune in at any time, including children!

I am about to do my first interview and I feel lost.

That's okay, you probably are lost. Here is a checklist to help you out before start setting it up.

I am doing a Live Interview...

- Have I done a pre-interview?
- Have I researched the topic and guest(s)?
- Do I know how to introduce all of my guests?
- Do I know how to pronounce the names of all of my guests?
- Do I have a script, or at least some important information written down?
- Have I briefed my guests on hand signals I may give them to speak closer to the mic, stop shuffling papers, etc?
- Do I have time before the interview to establish a connection with my guest(s)?
- Do I have a few minutes cleared at the end of the interview to thank my guest?
- If its a sensitive topic, have I checked in about what not to talk about?

I am doing a prerecorded interview...

- Have I booked studio time if necessary?
- Have I researched the topic and guests?
- Do I have a couple of throwaway questions ready to set my sound levels at the start of the interview?
- Do I know how long I want this interview to be after editing?
- Have I set a target length for the interview before editing?
- Do I have adequate time set aside to edit the interview before broadcast?
- Do I have a good reason for not doing this interview live?

What should I know about....Controversial Content and Watershed Hours?

The CRTC, Canada's regulatory body for broadcasters, can be vague when it comes to defining which "controversial" content is permitted on the air. Each complaint is examined in context and in relation to the [CAB Code of Ethics](#), which all campus/community stations are held to for programming standards. There are no hard rules for what can and cannot be said, but here are some tips which should cover you in the case of any complaints about your programming.

- Any content not suitable for children (i.e. containing overt swearing, graphic sexual content, or extreme violence) should be played **after 9pm and before 6am**, when children are less likely to be listening

- **Air a content warning** at the beginning of any show which contains questionable content, and directly preceding the most controversial clips or songs in the show, even if the show is after 9
- **Never use hateful language** (i.e. racist, sexist, homophobic, ableist, etc), and refrain from airing any music that uses hateful language. This is different from simply swearing or talking about controversial issues - hateful language is targeted at a specific group of people and is never welcome on the air.
- If a guest on your show uses hateful language, cut them off immediately and issue an apology to listeners
- If you receive a complaint about your programming from a listener, **do not argue with the listener**, simply inform them that their concerns have been noted and will be passed on the Program Manager

What is defamation? What about libel and slander?

or

Am I going to get sued???

Defamation, which includes both libel and slander, is a legal term meaning someone's reputation has been damaged. In legal jargon: "Any communication or representation that would tend to adversely affect the reputation of the plaintiff by lowering the reputation of the plaintiff in the estimation of the community is defamatory."

Libel:

Libel is anything written, printed, broadcast, or other "permanent" expression of a defamatory statement.

If you say something which could be interpreted as harmful to another person's reputation in print or on the air, you could be committing libel. **Truth** is a complete defence for libel. Basically, if you know something is true and you can prove it, you can go ahead and damage someone's reputation. However, the onus will be on you, the defendant, to prove truth.

There are a few other defences for libel including "**Fair Comment**", meaning that you honestly and reasonably believe that your comment was actually true, based upon true facts, regarding a matter of public interest. As a journalist, you can also use "**Responsible Communication**," meaning that the publication was a matter of public interest and you were diligent in verifying its accuracy. These two can apply even if it turns out your statement was not true.

The moral of the story is: if you are planning to say something that will damage someone's reputation, do your research. Even better, approach this person asking for their response to the defamatory allegations, and give them an opportunity to comment.

Slander:

Slander is a verbal statement or transitory expression (not in print or broadcast), such as a physical gesture, that is defamatory. For slander, the plaintiff must prove actual or special damages, which is not the case with libel.

I want to use information from a newspaper or another broadcaster. Can I do this without getting sued?

Yes! Nobody owns the news, and nobody owns facts. However, people do own copyright on specific ways these facts or news items are presented. If you read directly from a newspaper, use clips from another source, or basically regurgitate what some other hard-working reporter presented, make sure to cite your source, and don't use the entire thing. Reading an entire article is boring anyway. We want to make sure that you are using this item to simply illustrate or build on a point, not to copy someone else's point in its entirety.

"Under Fair Dealing, you are entitled to use very short portions of copyrighted written or audio material only for purposes of criticism, review, news reporting, education, or satire, as long as it is properly attributed at the time the material is used. Other uses that don't fall within the Fair Dealing exception require permission from the copyright holder before the material can be broadcast. In print, very short usually means no more than a few sentences or paragraphs, so the maximum length of an audio clip under Fair Dealing is likely somewhere around 10-15 seconds, but no more than is necessary to accomplish the intended purpose."

-Freya Zaltz, NCRA advisor on all things legal (see how I cited my source here, instead of just copying her words?)

I would like to cover an official election! How do I do this properly?

During an election period (i.e. from the date a federal, provincial, or municipal election is officially called until voting day), special [CRTC rules](#) apply to ensure that:

- 1) Stations provide at least some coverage of elections and referendums. We have a commitment to provide public affairs coverage for the benefit of the community, and voters need to be informed.
- 2) Stations provide airtime on an equitable* basis to all accredited political parties and rival candidates in the election or referendum.

*Equitable doesn't mean that everyone must get exactly the same coverage, but their viewpoints, platforms and perspectives must be acknowledged and communicated to some extent. Some candidates might choose not to accept your invitations, and you're not required to do anything except perhaps tell listeners that they have been invited and declined to attend, and perhaps give a very brief description of their publicly stated position on whatever issue is being discussed.

For example, if one show aired an hour-long interview with an NDP candidate, they would have to ensure that this would, at some point in the weekly schedule, be balanced by all other candidates in that riding *at least being offered* a similar amount of airtime.

Equity requirements must also be applied when presenting public affairs programs, such as party or candidate profiles, features on certain issues or panel discussions.

At the start of each election period, the CRTC usually sends around a special circular to station managers, which outlines many of these rules.

Here are some recent examples of circulars issued by the CRTC:

- [Federal Elections \(Broadcasting Information Bulletin CRTC 2011-218\)](#)
- [Provincial Elections \(Broadcasting Information Bulletin CRTC 2010-668\)](#)

I want to interview people on the telephone! Are there rules for this?

Yes! Here are some things to be aware of:

- Get caller consent before putting them on air (or hitting record for prerecording). This consent doesn't have to be recorded but it has to happen at some point. Guests have to know when they are being recorded/broadcast on the phone. It's a law.
- Screen calls! Don't put random people on the air who may be offensive. We don't have a delay button or a turn-back-time button so if they say something terrible, you could get us all sued, and everyone will be angry and broke.
- Record the telephone number of any live telephone guests on your show.