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| Radio for the Print Handicapped Co-operative Ltd (2RPH) |
| **Reader Manual** |
| An overview of important information for new readers |

**About this manual**

This manual is intended as a guide for our on-air volunteers. It contains information on policies and procedures established by 2RPH and is intended for your use as a volunteer only. It should not be made available to any person(s) outside of the co-operative.

[Cite your source here.]

Before we continue, it is important for you to know that while everyone enjoys their time here at 2RPH, there is a serious purpose to you being here. Given our aim is to deliver a quality radio reading service to our listeners, please keep in mind that being here isn’t about you. It’s about the people who hear our voices from 6am to 11:30pm and, in many cases, depend on our service to stay informed, entertained and a part of their community.

You are a vital part of our ability to deliver 2RPH, so thank you for contributing your time and effort.

**Our audience**

Our listeners include people with low vision or people who often can't hold a newspaper because of physical disabilities caused by strokes, arthritis, cerebral palsy, etc. The service aims to provide access to published material from the daily newspapers, national and international magazines, and book readings.

Listeners also include people from a non-English speaking background.

Additionally, people listen to 2RPH while they are driving, or working at home or at business, simply because they enjoy the programming. Some hospitals and nursing homes broadcast 2RPH through their 'in-house' systems.

In April 2019, the station reached out to its audience to complete the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia's (CBA) Station Community Engagement Survey (SCES). The survey was an opportunity for 2RPH to connect with its listeners and to find out who they are, when they listen, and how the program could be improved.

Listener facts:

* Average age of listeners: 63 years old
* Gender: Male listeners 65 per cent; female listeners 35 per cent
* Time spent listening each week on average: 17.3 hours
* Popular listening times: 9am to 12noon (68 per cent); 3pm to 7pm (63 per cent)
* Main reason for listening: Australian news and information
* Favourite music style: 55 per cent like classical music

**Rules and procedures**

Essentially, the rules can be broken down as follows:

Based on the RPH Protocol, all published items utilised on the air shall be read in full. Material shall be presented

with appropriate identification of:

* The publication
* The edition date of publication
* Page number
* Author’s name

It is crucial that you do not at any time while on air at 2RPH, deviate from these ‘rules’.

Failure to do this could result in the station’s funding being adversely affected and your

removal from air.

In addition to these rules, and carrying equal weight, is the following:

**Please back-announce**

We back-announce all articles. Repeat the title of the article, the author and the publication at the end of the article. We do not back-announce when reading short, filler articles (approx. 150-200 words) and letters, i.e. Letters to the Editor in The Australian.

Why do we back-announce? We have found that many listeners may tune in mid-article and then want to know where they can find the article. Rather than trying to locate the article in question, we want to make it easier for everyone by simply repeating these important details, so listeners know where they can locate an article they have heard on 2RPH.

**No personal commentary**

Do not make a personal comment whatsoever about the content of the material that is being read. Your own views and opinions must be left outside the studio. Volunteers have been removed from going on air for transgressions.

Political and other commentary is also not tolerated. Again, it comes down to respect for

our community, our listeners. If you are reading an article with which you totally

disagree it will show in your voice, if you are not careful. Try to avoid this by

remembering that many of the people listening might very well agree with the article.

Remember, we are here for them!

**Reading on air**

A good 2RPH reader is one who has better than average voice quality, enthusiasm, clear enunciation, good light and shade in delivery and the ability to read at a speed which allows the fullest comprehension by the listener.

Articles in newspapers are not written for reading aloud and present many traps for the

novice or ill-prepared reader. Sentence construction is often complex and convoluted; the

point size used is so small it’s below the comfort zone; hyphenations are a constant

hazard as is the occasional misprint, and narrow column widths are a mixed blessing –

the eyes don’t have to scan long lines but on the other hand the short line lengths can be

hard to navigate.

In this course we will present you with the guidance and techniques required for you to

meet the standards 2RPH expects of its reader volunteers. You will need to practice these

extensively before you will be ready to go in front of the mic.

**Before your shift…**

1. Please take the time to **warm up** your vocal chords.

2. Arrive on time to pre-read your articles.

3. During your pre-reading, please check any tricky names or other words for correct pronunciation. Refer to the ABC Pronounce icon on the Reception computer.

4. Bring a glass of water into the studio as the voice can get dry.

5. Be aware of the ‘cough’ button and minimise paper shuffling.

**Handy hints**

**Saliva**

Excess or lack of saliva are two problems that sometimes worry broadcast readers.

A common cause of excess saliva is sugar. Some readers leave sugar out of hot drinks for

a few hours prior to broadcast to help overcome saliva excess.

If you have an acute excess saliva problem it is wise to eat a cooking apple just before

going on-air. The high acidity has the effect of partially restricting saliva glands.

A dry mouth is best compensated by sipping warm water just before and during your on-air

shift. This will help avoid coughing fits better than coffee or tea.

Warm water is a general recommendation for all readers – take a glass of warm water

into the studio with you.

**Eating is prohibited in studios**

No food at all is allowed in the studio except lozenges if required. (Please remember to take them with you when you leave.)

**Phlegm**

Milk may create phlegm, causing the voice to sound thick. If you find this to be a

problem it’s best to avoid hot drinks with milk prior to going on-air. Chocolate can also be a hazard. Again, if it causes you a problem don’t indulge before your reading shift.

**Coughing**

There is a cough button on the panel in front of you as a reader. Please make sure you use them when the cough is just a little one. Although you cut off the broadcast when you use them, if the cough is a short ‘bark’ it will not be noticed and sounds much better for our listeners than a huge splutter over the air, which can cause people to start and it makes the broadcast sound more amateurish than we would ideally like.

If, however, you feel a major coughing session coming on, please make sure you

leave the studio. Without exception. Come right out into the prep area. Get some water,

a warm drink or warm water and then return to the studio. Your colleagues will happily

take over your readings for you. The announcers all know how to handle these situations, so there is no need for panic!

**Reading styles and techniques**

Reader volunteers on 2RPH may be asked to perform four different types or styles of on-air reading. These are for:

1: Newspaper news articles

2: Newspaper feature articles

3: Magazine articles

4: Books

Each requires a different technique or style of reading. However, for each you will need

to read at a constant pace, neither too slow, which sounds tedious to the listener, nor too

fast, which can sound like a “gabble” and be hard for the listener to follow.

**1. Reading newspaper news articles**

While it is important to read all material with good expression and intonation, readers

should not try to impose too much colour into “hard” newspaper articles. Read them in a straightforward manner, with your delivery well-paced and with clear intonation.

**2. Reading newspaper feature articles**

These cover a wide variety of subject matter and thus demand a wide variety of

approaches to the material being read. It is necessary for the reader to evaluate each

article and decide on an appropriate reading style. It is reasonable, indeed encouraged, for

some ‘colour’ to be injected into your delivery if it matches the tone of the article.

Many articles read in such programs as Features Forum are commentaries

concerned with current politics, international affairs, social issues and the like. Because

they are offering the opinions of the author and trying to impress the reader, the writing

style is generally more colourful than that of hard news items and requires a reading style

that matches.

Then, you have a wide variety of other articles which also lend themselves to a lighter or

more coloured approach – humorous columns, personality profiles, fashion commentary

and reviews, entertainment, the arts and so on. Try to match your delivery to the tone of

the article.

**3. Reading magazines**

You may wish to move on to recording magazines, which are all pre-recorded. These programs cover a huge variety of subjects and reading rules apply as for newspaper

features.

Adopt a style which is appropriate for the subject matter. There are other production details which you will need to be familiar with for pre-recorded

programs and management will fill you in on all the details you will need to know for the specific program.

**4. Reading books**

There are so many different types of books that it is hard to generalize about a reading

approach. Indeed, each book demands its own style. But unless you are a trained actor

beware of books requiring foreign accents or regional dialects – unless they are handled

well they will sound very amateurish when broadcast.

While there are different reading styles based on what is being read, there are some important things to keep in mind regardless of what you are reading.

**Reading ahead**

It is important for all reading to be accurate and well-phrased. Good phrasing results from

the reader being able to have his or her eyes a few words ahead of what they are saying.

This allows the reader to use slight pauses with good effect, be aware of words ahead

with difficult pronunciations, cope with clashing letters – the same letter ending one word and beginning the next (for example “night-time” – it sounds natural to run these words

together as “night-time” as opposed to the rather pedantic and unnatural “night time”).

Reading ahead sounds mad and difficult, but it really isn’t. However, it does require some

practice and we ask new volunteers to practice at home – you will soon get into the way

of it.

Reading ahead also allows the reader to make minor changes to the copy in order to make

rather stilted newspaper journalese more conversational and thus more appropriate for

broadcasting. “It is” can become “it’s”, “I am” changes to “I’m”.

**Handing quotations**

Copy in parenthesis requires special treatment. If the quote is short, it can be conveyed to the listener with a pause and changed inflection. However, if it is a long quote – perhaps the length of a paragraph or even two or more – it can be prefaced by saying “quoting” and concluded with “end of quote”.

**Offensive items and coarse language**

From time to time you will come across items which you may find offensive or which contain coarse language. Since it is our role to read what is printed, you should not skip these items. Read what is written. For example: “f…ing” or “f\*\*\*ing” should be read “effing” NOT ‘eff dot dot dot ing”. Don’t substitute “expletive deleted” if it’s there in black and white.   
  
If there is general agreement between announcers and readers that an item could cause offense or be disturbing, the announcer will make an appropriate statement such as “Under the protocols governing 2RPH programming we may not edit the items we read. We warn that the following item on page X of the Y contains material which may offend.”

**Handling mistakes**

Don’t worry; it happens to all of us! If you are doing a “live” read (that is, not being recorded for future broadcast) and stumble over a word, just repeat the word. If you really jumble up a phrase or sentence, offer an apology and say, “I’ll read that again”. However, if you are reading a magazine or book which is being recorded for future broadcast (see next section) only the most trivial of mistakes or “fluffs” should go uncorrected.   
  
As you are being recorded it is a simple matter for the recording to be stopped at the point where the mistake was made, and an edit executed to remove the word or phrase you tripped over. In such cases you start reading again from the beginning of the sentence where you stumbled.

**Studio procedures**

**Studio set up**

The broadcast suite comprises three studios each of which is equipped in much the same

way. Each is set up to be operated by an announcer or producer with provision for two readers on the opposite side of the control console.

The announcer and two readers each have their own microphones which are individually turned on and off by the announcer, or in the case of the two studios used for recording, by the reader doing his or her own panel operating, or panel operator/producer doing so.

All three studios are “air ready”. That means they can be put to air at any time if

required. Traditionally, 2RPH has used Studio 3 more than the other two, but this is not a

requirement. Therefore, you may find that one day you will arrive for your shift and be

directed to a different studio.

In each studio equipment currently includes the console which is sometimes called a

panel or a desk, one or two CD players and the broadcast equipment. The computers are

used for pre-recording when the studios are available for that purpose. During live-to-air

broadcasts, the computers carry our “announcer assist” playlists. The automation is put

to air through an “audio server” situated in our MCR (Master Control Room).

**Preparing for broadcast**

Before going on air, readers are required to participate in the preparation of the material

to be read so shifts are scheduled to start at a time which will allow adequate time for this

preparation.

Preparation of material differs from shift to shift. Your training will comprise “sit ins” on

various shifts in order that you may observe and participate in the preparation of the

newspapers for broadcast.

There are a few very important points we would like you to keep in mind to begin with:

**Arrive on time**

It is important for volunteers to understand that the starting time of shifts is not arbitrary

or voluntary as pre-broadcast preparation is of vital importance and punctuality is

expected. One of the most important tasks is to read through as much as possible of the material that you are going to broadcast so that you are aware of tricky phrasing and unfamiliar words.

Preparation of the newspapers is complex and involves understanding exactly what is

going to be read on air. Each segment of the programme you will be reading for, is

carefully scheduled and timing is of the essence. Therefore, correct preparation of the

papers is essential.

**Cutting the articles out**

Each article to be read is cut from the paper, in order that it can be easily manipulated

once you are in the studio. Also, it is necessary to avoid the worst of the paper rustling

which can make the show sound very amateur.

It is vital that you remember to write the page number on each article, in order that you will remember it when you come to read that article. Don’t forget to look for the continuations of the articles on later pages, attach them to the first part of the article with sticky tape.

Finally, each article should be placed in the correct clipboard/folder. Each of these is marked with the relevant segment of the programme. i.e.: FRONT PAGE, LOCAL & NATIONAL NEWS, BUSINESS NEWS, SPORT etc., if you forget any of these instructions, they appear in the red folder marked “Cutting Instructions” in the prep area.

**Hints to the selection of items**

Follow editorial policy. In other words, the editor of the publication you are about to

read, has made decisions about the placement of the articles. So select, cut and read them in that order. An additional advisory is to prioritise the articles from the right-hand page, and the articles above the fold of the paper. This will be gone into more detail at training.

**Pronunciation**

Please check pronunciations. There are three shortcuts on the desktop on the computer in the preparation area, giving you access to competent pronunciation websites.

OA (Voice of America)

FORVO.

HOWJSAY

There are also two comprehensive dictionaries available for readers as well as The

Whiteboard in the preparation room needs to be regularly updated by readers and

announcers, with any pronunciations they have come across. Simply write the word you have found the correct pronunciation for phonetically on the whiteboard.

**Water**

Before entering the studio to commence broadcasting the team needs to have a fresh

supply of water available – jugs and glasses are available in the kitchen – and presenters

should co-operate with each other to ensure these are on hand when broadcasting

commences. Warm water is the best cure for dry throats!

**Entering the studio**

Once an article has been read, strike it through in pen and place it aside. After the end of the show, each team is responsible for placing the ‘read’ articles into one of the paper bins in the cutting area.

Readers should go into the studio and prepare for broadcasting at least three or four

minutes prior to their program commencing. The announcer should indicate when he or

she would like you to enter – make sure you do so when the studio is not on-air, that is,

when none of the three microphones is ‘live’. Please maintain absolute silence when in

the ‘air lock’ (the air lock will be pointed out to you).

Make sure the entry door to the air lock is closed before opening any studio door.

**Leaving the studio**

When your shift concludes, if possible leave while there is no announcing or reading in

progress. If this is not possible, ensure that you leave as quietly as you can. The studio

should be left tidy.

**Being green**

2RPH encourages its volunteers to assist with energy saving activities, so please switch

off the lights and the air conditioning when you leave the studio.

**Working in the studio**

During live broadcasts, the announcer is responsible for the quality of the presentation of

the programs going to air in his or her shift. The readers (there are usually two readers on

duty at a time) sit opposite the announcer and take their instructions and cues from him or

her.

When the announcer switches your microphone on, the red light in the panel in front of

your seat will come on. There is a cough button on that panel too which you will utilise

under certain circumstances.

**Using the headphones**

All three of our studios are equipped with headphone ports for each of the two readers.

Listening to your own voice in the headphones will let you know exactly how your

audience is hearing you and is an invaluable aid to lifting the quality of your presentation.

Voice playback has been an essential ingredient of professional performance in the

theatre, television and radio for many years, and is now provided for 2RPH readers for

several of the newspaper reading shifts, via the 2RPH website podcast facility. Because

the compulsory wearing of headphones is a recent requirement, some of our long-serving

volunteers may find it difficult. Occasionally it has become a problem too difficult to

solve so they have the option of using them or not (there are signs in the studio to this

effect).

Some headphones are available but readers are strongly encouraged to bring their own.

You do not need to spend too much money on a set and you will become used to the

“sound” more easily.

However, we are requiring all new volunteers to familiarise themselves with using the

headphones and to use them when on-air. Each set has its own sound volume control (trace the cable to its connection under the desk to find it) and you can set the sound level to what you find comfortable.

What you hear will be not only your own voice but all the elements that are being

broadcast – themes and intros, station IDs, recorded announcements, fill-in music and the

voices of the announcer and the second reader.

**Use of the microphone:**

**Position of the microphone**

You should sit upright in front of the microphone and it should be positioned directly in

front of you about a hand span away from your mouth. Under no circumstances should

you touch your microphone or its adjustable arm while the red light is on – this can result

in the most horrendous noise being transmitted. Readers should avoid altering the

position of the microphone at all.

This is the responsibility of the announcer and if you feel it is not positioned correctly,

you should ask the announcer to move it. Or at the very least, you should adjust the

microphone before the programme begins if you wish to adjust your own mic. The best position for the mic is in a kind of head on position facing at an angle towards

your mouth.

**Voice level**

At 2RPH most of us are amateurs and rarely able to maintain a voice level consistently

throughout a broadcast. Generally, we do not bother with voice levels before going to air.

That said, some announcers will ask you to give them a “level”. Simply speak a few

words in your normal voice at your anticipated reading level into the microphone, if

asked; however, it is not in any way station policy and is unnecessary.

**“Popping”**

You are probably familiar with “popping” noise from time to time when listening to

speech on radio broadcasts or by someone using a microphone and amplifier. This

happens on consonants such as “p” and “t” and is the result of the reader being too close

to the mic therefore your mouth should be no closer than a hand span from the mic, but sometimes even then “popping” can happen and the announcer will adjust the position of

your mic accordingly.

**Noises off**

**Paper rustle**

Microphones are extremely sensitive instruments and pick up virtually every sound

generated in the studio by its occupants. A particular problem is paper rustle, and this is a

real danger in our many newspaper reading programs. You are going to be handling lots

of newspaper clippings and you must take great care to ensure that the noise of rustling is

kept to an absolute minimum - none is the ideal.

Whenever you have to move newspaper clippings around, make sure you do it if

possible when your microphone is off and even then, be cautious with your movements. If

you have to move a clipping to or from the direction of the other reader’s mic while it is

live, be doubly careful with your movements.

If you need to move out of the studio, try to do this when there is no live mic in the studio (during a music break or while a recorded announcement is on air). If you have to

go out urgently to cough or for some other emergency, do so with the greatest caution

and be as silent as possible.

**Mobile phones**

Please leave your mobile phones outside the studio at all times. If this is impossible for

you, then ensure that it is switched off before you go on air. If a phone rings during a

broadcast, not only do we sound like amateurs, but it is distracting for the listener.

**Hand signals/wind up signal**

It is very important that you know how to read and give hand signals, which are vital to

the smooth running of all radio programs.

Obviously, you can’t say on air “you’re next” or “I’ve almost finished my article” or “cut

the mic I need to cough” so we have to let our hands do the talking. These are known as

giving (and receiving) cues.

When you are coming to the end of the article you are reading (about the last sentence is

a good rule of thumb), you need to indicate this by raising your hand – ensuring that this

signal can be seen by both the other reader and the announcer. Continue this while you

read to the end, then, when you have finished the article, bring your hand down slowly

until it reaches the desk being very careful not to bang your hand down too hard, in case

it can be heard on air! Try not to point straight at the other reader or the announcer in case you accidentally hit the boom arm of the microphone, which causes a “boom” sound

on air.

Similarly, watch for these cue signals to you from both the announcer and other reader. It

has been the practice at 2RPH for the “about to end” signal to be a circular winding motion with the hand. We feel the raised hand is a much easier signal to employ and we

encourage new volunteers to use this, but understand that most volunteers will use the old

signal – so be aware of both!

**Preparing to read**

The reason to give an “about to wind up” signal is to let the other reader know that they

should be preparing to read. Take a deep breath or two at this point and be ready to read

as soon as the other reader utters the last word.