

# Public Service Announcement

First course, Third grading period, Week 3

The Public Service Announcement (PSA) is a mainstay of many radio stations. Although usually not written by employees of the station, the PSA gives students an experience in writing for audience and the ear, addressing the concerns of a client, and handling persuasive techniques.



## Enduring Understanding

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Airing PSAs is part of being a good corporate citizen.



## Essential Questions

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What is the purpose of a PSA? What awareness of the business (in this case, nonprofit) or service and how much research are needed to write the PSA? How does one select a persuasive technique to use?



## Objectives and Outcome

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- Students will practice persuasive techniques.
- Students will combine brevity, carefully chosen diction, sound and vocalization to produce a PSA.
- Students will become aware of nonprofit organizations in their community.



## Suggested Time

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Five days



## Resources and Materials

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- Directory of nonprofit organizations in your community
- Minidisks or other recorders
- Editing software and workstation
- The Ad Council ([www.adcouncil.org](http://www.adcouncil.org))  
View the PSABulletin, learn about Ad Council produced and endorsed PSAs on PSA Central on The Ad Council Web site.
- Historic PSA Campaigns ([http://www.adcouncil.org/campaigns/historic\\_campaigns/](http://www.adcouncil.org/campaigns/historic_campaigns/))  
From the Savings (or War) Bonds of 1932 to the I Am An American campaign beginning in 2001, the PSAs on this site give a glimpse of American history and culture.
- National Association of Broadcasters (<http://www.nab.org/publicservice/>).  
NAB's National Campaigns department assists radio stations to address national social concerns. PSAs, resources guides and more about current campaigns are available at this site.
- "The PSA," Writing for Television, Radio and New Media, pages 71-74.



## Procedure

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1. Listen to three to five examples of public service announcements. Explain to students that most people use the acronym PSA. Teachers may have taped PSAs, visited one of the Web resources listed above or contacted local nonprofits for samples of their current campaigns. Questions may include:
  - What do the PSAs have in common?
  - What kind of information is presented to the listener?
  - What do you know that you didn't know before listening to the PSA?
  - In what way is the PSA a type of commercial?
2. Give students "Are You Ready For The PSA?" Students select the nonprofit organization for which they will write and record a PSA. After research on the PSA, students fill in the bottom portion of this handout. Teachers may conference with them or students may begin writing a first draft.
3. You may need to review the persuasive techniques (testimonial, band wagon, humor) with students. Begin with the PSAs shared at the beginning of class. What makes a PSA memorable? A slogan: From "Loose Lips Sink Ships" to "Take a Bite Out of Crime" one phrase said it all. What else is used in radio to make an impression?

Also, share with students "PSA Evaluation Rubric" so they understand the qualities for which they will be graded.

4. Students form pairs at the beginning of the next class period. In pairs, read their PSAs aloud. After hearing the PSA, the listener completes "PSA Draft Critique." The writer/reader reviews the critique and turns it into the teacher with the draft. The teacher may give draft and critique credit and do no more or write a brief comment to direct each student in writing the next draft.
5. At the beginning of the next class period, students bring in their revised drafts. Give them "PSA Self-Evaluation" to complete. Use the class period to share some of the PSAs. Students are to select one area for which they would like advice. In turn, each student reads his or her PSA, asks the question and the class responds only to the targeted area. After reviewing the comments, students could give teachers their drafts with the self-evaluation or turn them in the next class period after having used the information when writing the final draft of the PSA.

Emphasize with students the need to be exactly at 30 seconds when the music, sound and voicing are complete. The PSA cannot be too long or too short.

6. Students use the remainder of the class to write and type the final script with the sound effects, background music, ambient sound and different voices indicated. After students have completed the final draft, either review the script (and grade) before each student records it or have each student move to the next steps — taping and editing.
7. Students tape and edit their :30 PSAs.
8. Students share their completed PSAs with the class. See extra credit option below.



## Homework

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Research the nonprofit that has been selected. Go to the group's Web site. Do an Internet search to see what others say about the organization. Is there anything in the newspaper's business section about it? Write the first draft of a PSA.

Using the first critiques and class suggestions, students will rewrite their PSAs. This may require additional research.

Students will get all the sound they need, arrange for an appointment to record the "guest testimonial" and practice reading the script.



## Assessment

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Teachers will determine the approach they wish to take on grading the drafts. Participation and completion credit may be sufficient if students have been directed in writing critiques that aim for an improved product. Instill in them the "Three Musketeers" corporate model. They are training for future employment in an industry that requires all members of the team to work together.

Some teachers will give their students one minute to run through the final taping of the :30 PSA. Others will allow numerous read-throughs and hours of editing. Teachers might first assess what their goals are for the writing, the performing, the recording and editing steps. Give students sufficient time to meet each goal and to be ready to move on with a product and a skill learned or honed.

Use critique sheet to evaluate the PSA. Extra credit may be given if the student arranges for the PSA to be heard by a representative of the organization. Bonus points are given if the nonprofit wants to use the PSA or if permission is given by the organization (in writing) to air the PSA on the school's radio station.

If you wish to provide students with an extra credit opportunity, have them do research on one of the historic PSA campaigns that are presented on the Ad Council Web site. Have them put the campaign into historic context and interview five to 10 people of different ages to see if the slogan or another feature of the campaign is remembered.



## Academic Content Standards

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Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes. (Standard 5, NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts)

Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information). (Standard 12, NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts)

Identify figurative language and rhetorical structures (parallel structure, quotations, examples, exaggeration, emotional appeal) used to engage the audience (DCPS English Language Arts, (9.I.9)

Analyze the effect on the reader's or viewer's emotions of text and image in print journalism, and images, sound, and text in electronic journalism, distinguishing techniques used in each to achieve those effects. (DCPS English Language Arts, 10.M.2)

Create media presentations that effectively use graphics, images, and/or sound to present a distinctive point of view on a topic. (DCPS English Language Arts, 10.M.4)

Revise writing to improve the topic/idea development, organization, language/style, word choice, and the tone in light of the audience, purpose and formality of the context (DCPS English Language Arts, 9.W.5)

Describe how persuasive and rhetorical techniques (e.g., repetition, sentence variety, understatement, overstatement, irony, sarcasm) contribute to the power of persuasive text, given the audience, purpose, and occasion. (DCPS English Language Arts, 10.I.10)

Evaluate the aural, visual, and written images and other special effects used in television, radio, film productions, and the Internet for their ability to inform, persuade, and entertain (e.g., anecdote, expert witness, vivid detail, tearful testimony, humor). (DCPS English Language Arts, 12.M.1)



## Industry Standards/Expectations

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Comprehend the use of promotional materials, standard public service announcements, commercials/ad, press kits, and advertising tags. (Performance Element, Pathway KS Statement: Exhibit knowledge of business issues related to journalism and broadcasting, States' Career Clusters, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium)

The SkillsUSA Championships Technical Committee selected the following competencies as essential and to be demonstrated through their radio competition project:

- Demonstrate knowledge of audio production technology, safety procedures and trade terminology,
- Plan radio/audio production,
- Perform audio recordings and editing operations,
- Perform audio mixing, and
- Complete script.

# Are You Ready for the PSA?

You see them all the time on TV — Smokey the Bear, McGruff, and television and movie stars in “Help Stop Fires,” “A Mind Is a Terrible Thing to Waste,” “This Is Your Brain on Drugs.” These national public service announcements are produced by large advertising agencies and distributed by the Ad Council.

They are heard on radio as well. What PSAs for local causes do you recall hearing? These public service announcements are sent to local radio and TV stations by the local agencies that want publicity for their programs. The information may end up on a calendar of upcoming events or as PSAs.

PSAs have often been called free commercials because the sponsoring agency does not pay to have these public service messages run. In fact, in order to qualify for free PSAs, the agency or group must be a federally authorized nonprofit organization. They don’t pay federal taxes.

Stations run the PSAs for free, but they are not required to run them when the agencies want them to be aired. PSAs are often run at times when radio and TV stations don’t have any commercials to run, usually late at night, during the early morning hours, on weekends, and sometimes during regular weekday hours when the available commercial time has not sold out.

*The idea behind writing an effective PSA is the same as that behind writing an effective commercial. You are to write a :30 PSA. Begin by selecting a nonprofit agency and doing some research.*

My nonprofit agency or cause: \_\_\_\_\_

*In the space below, identify those benefits that this agency/cause provides.*

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What “needs” do the above benefits fill: \_\_\_\_\_

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Analyze the audience for your PSA.

Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Age Range \_\_\_\_\_ Location (Rural, Suburban, Urban) \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_ Nationality/Race \_\_\_\_\_ Politics \_\_\_\_\_

Income Range \_\_\_\_\_ Profession(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Housing (Own/Rent) \_\_\_\_\_ Other Information \_\_\_\_\_

The radio format to which the target audience listens \_\_\_\_\_

Method or style of presentation that best suits the non-profit/cause, the target audience and station format \_\_\_\_\_

Use all of the above information to draft the script of a :30 PSA. \_\_\_\_\_

# PSA Draft Critique

Critiquer \_\_\_\_\_

PSA writer \_\_\_\_\_

Title of PSA \_\_\_\_\_

Agency/cause \_\_\_\_\_

*After hearing the PSA read by its writer, respond to the following questions.*

1. To whom does the PSA appeal? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What is the most memorable aspect of the PSA? *(This might include a phrase, its tone, celebrity appeal, localizing the appeal.)* \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What persuasive technique was used? How effective is it? *(Analogy, Bandwagon, Testimonial or Endorsement, Transfer, Appeal to Authority, Emotion or Logic)* \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What suggestions do you have to improve the PSA? \_\_\_\_\_

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# PSA Self-Evaluation

Writer of PSA

Title of PSA

Agency/Cause

Focus

*Use this checklist to determine if you have written the best PSA that you can. You might rate yourself on a 1-3 scale with 3 being the highest. After answering the questions, use the information to make any changes you feel need to be made. You are ready to write the final draft.*

- \_\_\_ 1. Have you written conversationally for the ear?
- \_\_\_ 2. Have you involved listeners, captured and excited their imaginations?
- \_\_\_ 3. Did you stick to one strong, central idea?
- \_\_\_ 4. Have you gotten attention quickly?
- \_\_\_ 5. Have you written for your prospect or target audience?
- \_\_\_ 6. Have you chosen words, music and effects that can register in your prospect's mind? Radio cannot show the image of a Native American crying over pollution ("The Crying Indian" aired on Earth Day, 1971), but it can utilize sound, description and a memorable phrase.
- \_\_\_ 7. Do you have a phrase that will be remembered? Examples include "The Toughest Job You'll Ever Love" (Peace Corps) and "People Start Pollution. People Can Stop It" (anti-pollution).
- \_\_\_ 8. Did you set the mood for your PSA based upon how you want the listener to hear and react?
- \_\_\_ 9. Is your tone appropriate for the nonprofit and the message?
- \_\_\_ 10. Have you kept an approachable feeling throughout your message?
- \_\_\_ 11. If your appeal is supposed to be humorous, is it really funny?
- \_\_\_ 12. Have you avoided stereotyping?
- \_\_\_ 13. Is the vocalization appropriate? Think of the voices that a listener will hear. Would McGruff the Crime Dog have the same appeal and impact if he sounded like Mickey Mouse or Pluto?
- \_\_\_ 14. Have you selected the appropriate spokesperson for your message? (Why was it important that Nancy Reagan voiced her own appeal in 1982 rather than an announcer who stated, "Do as First Lady Nancy Reagan says, 'Just Say No.'")
- \_\_\_ 15. Is the agency/cause identified? Will it be quickly and easily registered in the consumer's mind?
- \_\_\_ 16. Have you avoided overwriting — crowding the PSA with too much copy?
- \_\_\_ 17. Have you made your appeal clear?
- \_\_\_ 18. Have you given your listener something to do — react to your message, remember it, act upon it?
- \_\_\_ 19. Once is not enough. Have you repeated anything the listener might not get the first time?
- \_\_\_ 20. When you read it through with music and any sound effects, does it meet the time requirement?

Do you know what changes to make before you write the final script?



# PSA Evaluation Rubric

Student

Topic

Category	Excellent 25 points	Meets Standards 20 points	Needs Improvement 15 points	Unacceptable 0 points
<b>Topic</b>	Nonprofit. Idea promoted by society as “good.” Desired action is surprising or point is made in a riveting way.	Nonprofit. Idea promoted by society as “good.” Desired action is clear.	Idea is trite. Desired action not clear.	Not nonprofit. Cannot be used for PSA.
<b>Script</b>	Quick-paced. High level of creativity in the script. Could be described as “catchy” or “memorable.”	Quick-paced. Original idea (not copied from existing PSAs), but predictable in conceptualization and/or wording.	Pacing is slow. Listener is not left with a message to carry away. Could be described as sufficient message, but “same ol’ thing.”	Does not succeed in communicating the message.
<b>Diction &amp; Sound</b>	Sounds are rich enough and descriptions are sufficient to evoke a setting or set the tone. Keeps listener’s attention.	Descriptions cover the basics. Diction and sound combine to leave an impression.	Listener is more taken by the sound than by the message.	The human voice and text have little unity or the tone offends the listener. The listener turns against the non-profit.
<b>Technical Quality</b>	Production values enhance the delivery of the message. Goes beyond basic skills in producing and capturing sound and editing.	Demonstrates basic skills in taping and editing. No problems in sound. Editing is clean and tight.	Some minor errors in basic skills, but don’t significantly detract from the message. (Sound may be at inconsistent levels but still understandable.)	Major error in basic skills of audio and/or editing that detract from communicating the message. (Uneven or low volume, for example.)