

# Ambience

First course, First grading period, Week 4

Focusing on ambience is valuable for students in the first course. Even though they will not be doing advanced recording until later classes, they will be aware of sound all around them. They will be aware of ambience as they later record their news wraps, PSAs and everything else with more care.



## Enduring Understanding

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Radio is sound and relies on sound alone to convey information, ideas and attitudes. Understanding how to use sound and its potential to communicate is essential to radio.



## Essential Question

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What are the elements of producing usable, “solid” radio sound?



## Objectives and Outcome

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The student will learn how to hear and recognize the different elements of radio sound and how to collect them.



## Suggested Time

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Three days



## Resources and Materials

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- Pre-selected tapes in the categories under discussion: ambience — different kinds (active and passive) — and room tone — heaters, lights, computer hum, crowd
- Minidiscs
- Microphones
- Headphones
- Audio workstations



## Procedure

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This lesson should be taught using the following cycle: listen, discuss, assignment, practice, critique.

1. Ambience is everywhere. Define ambience and discuss why ambience is important to the production of a smooth sound to the ear. Play examples of general ambience:
  - Room tone (Discuss air-conditioner, heater, computers, lighting, and general room sounds.)

- Specific ambience — get students to generate a possible list. Include what is discussed above and add more (clocks, school bells, busses, phones, street ambience, background sounds). Get 20 background samples like room tone and computer sounds, and thirty specific ones like school bells, and several odd ones you might not think of like: talking in the hall while you are interviewing in a quiet room and music in the background. Think broadly. Get discussion going.
- When recording, always get at least a minute of background sound wherever you are — always. The golden ambience rule.
- If there is time, discuss when ambience gets in the way and when it is not necessary

2. Students in groups fan out and record examples of the ambience discussed above.

If time allows, share examples of ambience that have been collected. If not, begin class the next day with this discussion of collecting ambience.

3. For 10 to 20 minutes listen and talk about pre-selected audio examples in class. Students gather tape for five minutes.

At the end of the period or the next day, class and/or teacher critique the new tapes for length, overall usefulness (Talking while gathering sound is a No-No.), skill in recording at a proper level, and skill with proper microphone placement. Bring together information from “Microphones — The Basics” and “Minidiscs — The Basics” and this lesson. Students need to understand from the beginning of this course that lessons are not forgotten in Radio Production, they are honed and used as a foundation for the next level.



## Homework

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Students are asked to listen to radio for 30 minutes on two evenings. In their journals they indicate the date, the program, the time and give examples of ambience that they hear during the half hour. Encourage them to listen to two types of programs.



## Assessment

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This is early in the course. Students are developing the ear for sound, not becoming experts at recording sound. Give them credit for understanding the types of sound they were to collect and having the required number of examples.



## Academic Content Standards

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### National Benchmark

Know skills used in electronic communications (e.g., producing audio recordings and broadcasts, producing video recordings and motion pictures). (McREL, Arts & Communication Career, Grades 9-12)



## Industry Standards and Expectations

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Apply knowledge of equipment and skills related to audio production. (Pathway KS Statement: Audio and Video Technology and Film, States' Career Clusters, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium)

Examine equipment and its function. (Performance Element, Pathway KS Statement: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of technical support related to broadcasting, States' Career Clusters, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium)

# Lost and Found Sound

*First course, First grading period, Week 4*

Becoming aware of the possibilities of sound, the interesting and varied nature of it, will open students' minds to hearing every possibility with more understanding, excitement, and awareness of what sound is.

Using the NPR series Lost and Found Sound students will explore, discover, and talk about what they hear; they will list other lost sounds that would be wonderful to find. This exercise is a celebration of sound for sound's sake and enhances students' understanding of how sound adds to the richness of our world and its history.



## Enduring Understanding

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Thinking in sound is essential to good radio just as thinking in a foreign language is the goal of fluency.



## Essential Question

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How does sound add to the richness of our world and its history?



## Objectives and Outcome

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Students will become more aware of the richness of sound and its role in our world.



## Suggested Time

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One to two days



## Resources and Materials

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A Primer on Lost and Found Sound (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=3602611>). Site includes "Introduction to the Quest for Sound" and "Introduction to Lost & Found Sound" of the 1999 series that ran weekly and has intermittent additions. Examples from the series are online to download.



## Procedure

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1. Play "Introduction to Lost & Found Sound." After discussing the premise of the series, select Past Stories online. Have students select two stories to hear from the available Lost and Found Sound stories. Play the pieces and talk with the class about what was said about the sounds in them.
  - Did students like how the stories were told?
  - What would they have done differently if they were telling the story?
  - What else would they add?

2. In class, generate a list of possible sounds that are lost.

Examples can be people, animals, inanimate objects that might have recordings of them but are no longer possible to record and individuals and things never recorded. Examples would include:

- Dodo bird
- The Concord
- The distress message from the Titanic
- Hillary at the top of Mt. Everest or on his descent
- Atillah the Hun's elephants going over the Alps
- The first snowfall of 2001
- Bach playing his own music

3. Get students to add sounds they want to preserve today for posterity. Examples would include their family's voices and their graduation ceremonies from high school.

4. You may wish to return to this assignment when students have more experience with recording and editing. Have them record the sounds they wish to preserve and create a sound wrap.



## Homework

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Continue generating the list. Each student has to add five items. Listen to three more segments of the Lost and Found Sound series off the Web site. Write a paragraph about what they liked and didn't like about how the story was told. How effective are they in conveying the sound, the attitude and time period? How would they have done it differently?

Have students consider taping the sound they wish to preserve for the next generation of their family or school.



## Assessment

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Grade the homework and note students' class participation during discussions.



## Academic Content Standards

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### National Benchmark

Know skills used in electronic communications (e.g., producing audio recordings and broadcasts, producing video recordings and motion pictures). (McREL, Arts & Communication Career, Grades 9-12)

Determine the purpose(s) for listening (e.g., get information, solve problems, for enjoyment). (DCPS English Language Arts, 2.L.3)

Analyze visual or aural techniques used in a media message for a particular audience and evaluate their effectiveness. (DCPS English Language Arts, 9.M.2)



## Industry Standards and Expectations

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