

SOUND OFF

How to Create A PSA

A **Public Service Announcement (PSA)** is a non-commercial advertisement used to change public attitudes and behaviors. This form is designed to help you to create your own PSA for Sound Off: Pennsylvania's Drug Prevention Television/Radio PSA Contest.

Learn the 10 Major Steps in the Production Process

It is important to understand the following steps before creating your PSA.

1. **Target Audience.** Identify a specific target audience that you want to reach.
2. **Research.** Find out about target audience to learn more about what they already think and feel.
3. **Goal.** Develop a specific goal: what would you like your viewers or listeners to do? What would you like viewers or listeners to feel?
4. **Format.** Decide whether to use a straightforward *pitch* or a *story* format.
5. **Script and Slogan.** Write a script that gets audience attention, motivates their interest, stimulates desire, and produces action.
6. **Talent.** Select people with appropriate voices who will perform.
7. **Music and sound effects.** Select or create music and sound effects that you will use in your ad.
8. **Practice.** Practice performing the script and make revisions as needed to improve.
9. **Record.** Perform your ad.
10. **Broadcast.** Send your PSA to the PA National Guard!

Who is your Target Audience?

When creating your PSA, it is important to know your Target Audience. That is, whose knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, or feelings would you like to change? Keep in mind your audience's:

Age Range ♦ Gender ♦ Role/Job ♦ Hobbies ♦ Race/Ethnicity

What is the Problem?

What is one wrong fact, misguided belief, or bad attitude that this group of individuals is likely to have about drugs?

What is the Solution?

What is one accurate fact, new belief or attitude, or feeling that you would like this group of individuals to have about drugs?

How are You Going to Get Attention & Influence Attitudes?

All advertising messages use strategies to get your attention and influence your attitudes. Brainstorm ideas on how you can get the audience's attention and influence their attitude. Here are some common techniques:

Story – characters face various life situations, sometimes with conflict or controversy

Humor – unexpected or funny images or situations attract audience attention and create a mood

Testimonials – endorsements from celebrities or other likeable people that appeal to audiences

Bandwagon – claiming that smart or cool people are using the product, so you should, too

Emotional words or facts – using powerful words or ideas to create desire, urgency, or importance

Repetition – name or image of the product or idea is repeated numerous times

Slogan – a catchy phrase that attracts attention

Jingle – music that attracts attention

Story or Pitch?

The Pitch: This approach has an announcer telling you what the problem is and what the solution is, telling you why you want it, and how you should go about getting it. Pitch ads often directly ask or command the viewer/listener to do something.

The Story: The story format uses a mini-movie that drops viewers/listeners into a drama or comedy taking place. Most variations of this format boil down to two characters interacting with each other. One laments a problem and the other offers a solution, then tells where to get it.

Getting the Timing Right

Your script needs to be exactly 30 seconds in length so aim for 75 words. You might want to use a stopwatch to practice timing the performances.

Practice, Practice, Practice!

Before submitting your PSA to the PA National Guard, practice and receive feedback from your peers.