

## Guidelines: what we're looking for in a mini radio play

The points below are guidelines – you may find other ways to keep us riveted, and will be given credit to the extent you succeed. The following will be explicitly considered, however.

**Presentation:** Remember to check **Rules** for required formatting. Check grammar and spelling. Use a clear font. Keep character names (in full) separate on left, in caps. Clearly separate scenes. Number speeches, with an extra line after each speech – e.g.

23. GROGGLE MONSTER: *(Snickers horribly. Sound of window-glass breaking, a yelp and another, faintly embarrassed snicker.*

*Retreating lop-sided wing-beats, a few fading grunts of pain. Distant but clear imploding pop.)*

24. MPHO: *(ironic mutter)* Great. And I'm too *big* to eat, you id...

*(new wing-beats)* oh *no* – and you? – gonna hari kiri on the shards?

**Plot:** Yes plot! Give us crisis – or at least struggle or conflict...development...climax or denouement (meaning satisfying ending, *not* punch-line). Surprises, gripping details, twists... movement, suspense, danger, hard choices – all good. (In 3 minutes? – Why not? All *sorts* of things happen in 3 minutes. Anyway, you can wrap a radio minute round the Big Bang-Crunch, if you want.)

**Characters:** Make characters vivid, engaging, convincing – easy to tell apart by ear, with interesting contrasts relevant to the plot (wonderful hero, terrifying villain). Each should be clearly introduced, easy to picture, their motives perceptible. Keep them in character – but character may develop. If the plot brings change – e.g. insight – to the main character (and let us identify!), well done.

**Dialogue:** Every word should shift events. Make speech energetic, emotional. Have characters engage one another directly; inform by dramatic revelation (e.g. by goals becoming actively opposed) – not explanation or description. Wit, pace, economy, conviction – and *clarity!* – all good. Variety of pace, emotion, location, scene length – good too.

**Dramatisation:** Plunge into a crisis or dramatic high point and build tension and emotion higher. Sustain! Elicit tears, laughter, terror. Interrupt suspense with excitement or comic relief. And again, don't *tell* us things – show us their dramatic consequences.

**Sounds:** Listeners will know *nothing* but what you convey in dialogue & sounds. Make the story continuous to the ear. Let sounds tell stories: events (rain? Bomb-blast?), mood, action (car starts?), ambience (i.e. background detail – instant scene change on tap!). Don't shirk on important sounds: make them specific, interesting and varied – but don't overdo it.

**Medium (besides sound):** Be intensely aware of your medium (listen to old radio plays, if you can). Scenes can be vanishingly short (Groggle monster close-up against garden sounds: groan, pop?). Above all, use the listener's imagination and remember you can pop as easily into to last week or the mesozoic, next year or your protagonist's mind as next door.

**Ideation:** Science Fiction/Fantasy is about ideas and imagination – original, intriguing ideas and fresh ways to use old ones.

■ ■ And finally, your play should ring true – how to put this? We want to *like* it. The best way to achieve this is simple (in concept!): write one you really like, yourself.

Enjoy!

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(Development of criteria indebted inter alia to IRDP & BBC sites)