

This is supplementary material for the Kyle D. Stedman's webtext, "Podcasting *Bad Ideas About Writing*," published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/inventio/stedman/index.html>

Email from Kyle Stedman to Authors of *Bad Ideas About Writing*

from: Kyle Stedman
date: Jul 22, 2020, 1:47 PM
subject: Reading your Bad Ideas chapter

Good afternoon!

If you're getting this, you're someone who volunteered to read your chapter from *Bad Ideas about Writing*--how excellent! I'm happy to help you distribute your work in this new mode.

I'm writing with a few basic pieces of advice: on consistency, on reading, and on recording. I'm sure many of you know what you're doing far more than I do, so please take this not as nagging but as a friendly offering of help for anyone who wants it.

On Consistency

I'm thinking of this project as both a podcast and an audiobook, which means that I'm hoping to faithfully recreate the exact printed text without commentary, though I'm adding "bumper" language to the beginning and end of each podcast episode. That focus on recording a consistent audiobook leads to a few choices I've made in the chapters I've tested reading so far:

- Even when I've felt tempted to comment on something in the text, or even when I want to change "e.g." to "for example" or make another "easier out loud" change, I've been trying to restrain myself. Please read the exact text as published (unless there's an obvious proofreading error--for example, someone typed the last name "Roska" that should have been "Roksa," and I pronounced it correctly, not following the book; no need to say [sic] or anything when it's clearly a mistake in the printed text).
- I've been introducing chapters with something like this: "Today's bad idea about writing is: [title of chapter], which is by [author]." Then I just start reading. I'd love for you to use a sentence something like that if you can. It's worded that way because I want to emphasize the "joke" of the book: that the chapter titles are tongue-in-cheek, not what you actually believe.
- At the end of the chapter, when it gets to the Further Reading and Keywords, I just dive into them and read them as written: I say, "Further Reading," pause, and read that part. Then I say, "Keywords," pause, and read them, one at a time.
- After the keywords, I say this: "You just heard the bad idea [title] by [author]. In 2017, the author published this bio: _____. " And if I have an update, I say, "In Summer 2020, the author updated it with me by adding...." That way, the published book continues to be recorded faithfully as it was.
- Then I'll add some stuff at the end about Creative Commons and thanks and theme music and such.

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On Reading

There's some great basic advice on reading work aloud at the "[About recording](#)" page at Librivox.org, a site where volunteers read public domain audiobooks aloud.

I'm also cowriting (with Tanya Rodrigue) a textbook on teaching with sound, so I'm browsing the advice in our first-draft version of the chapter--but today, to you, a lot of it sounds pretty obvious: consider marking up your chapter before reading, practicing out loud, visualizing that you're talking to a friend you know well, using your normal body language (shrugging, gesturing, etc), and just accepting that your voice is your own and is thus perfect, even if you don't like the way it sounds.

I know for me, if I'm not 100% sure the delivery of a sentence was my best, I just say it again, and then I edit it out on my relisten. I'm hoping you'll be able to do that kind of basic editing on your own, but of course if you'd like me to I can do some basic cleaning up of your file. (I'll do a listen-through to make sure it matches the book before posting.) Personally, when I'm recording my reading, I pause A LOT to grab my breath and sip water, so my raw audio file has huge spaces between every few sentences. That's fine--they can easily be edited out (by you or me).

On Recording

I'm not too picky about audio quality--but on the other hand, I do want this to sound relatively nice. My plan is to do some basic volume leveling ("[compression](#)") on your recording, but probably not much else, so the better your raw file, the better. (That's why I'd like a high-quality audio file from you: ideally a WAV or highest-quality MP3 or OGG, so everything will sound at its best after I produce the full episode.)

Again, this is probably obvious, but just in case: use your best mic (probably not your built-in laptop mic), even if that means talking into your phone or the earbuds that came with your phone. Minimize external sounds; I tend to turn off my AC and remove a ticking clock when I record. Try to read in a room with lots of soft surfaces--a living room with couch and carpets, or even better, a walk-in closet.

Record a few practice sentences before deciding your setup works, and listen to your practice sentences in headphones (since that's how many listeners will listen). If something sounds echoey or noisy or awkward in some way, you'll notice. If you don't, most of your listeners won't either!

Okay, that got way longer than I intended, and I hope you can tell that I feel really awkward acting like I'm Mr. In Charge when it's really YOU reading YOUR OWN work--I get it. Think of me as a friendly producer trying to help you be your best. And if you have advice I missed, feel free to reply-all to this small group with your own thoughts!

You're all awesome,

Kyle