

DORKING AND DISTRICT TALKING NEWSPAPER

Guidance Notes – Readers

Issue 6.0: Revised December 2023 – **Please destroy all previous editions.**

1. If you have time during the day it is worth reading through the paper before the recording.
2. Arrive at the URC at 6.15pm to meet up with the Recorder and other Readers. Access to the building is by keypad lock: you will be sent the current key code separately. The key to the Upper Room door is in a Key safe on the back of the door. The combination is the same as for the outside door.
3. Drinking water is available from the kitchen but you may wish to bring your own.
4. Folders are allocated for Readers 1, 2 and 3. They can be found in the tray in the DDTN equipment cupboard. Also in the tray is a “Quiet Please” notice. Take this out and place it prominently on the bottom stair of the staircase from the kitchen so that other URC users are aware that recording is in progress.
5. It is important to read through the items in your folder before the recording starts to check for difficult pronunciations and decipher any typesetting uncertainties. The Editors may have drawn attention to these by underlining or highlighting them. If in doubt, ask your fellow Readers.
6. There should be items marked “front page” or “1” in each folder. The Editors may have also identified items 2 & 3. It is important that you read the main items selected by the editors in the order they have chosen.
7. It is the Editors’ job to select the items: they may be uninteresting or have difficult wording but they are what is in the Dorking Advertiser, which is quoted “by the kind permission of the proprietors”. If your folder contains an article which you would feel uncomfortable reading, please don’t just put it to the bottom of the pile and avoid it: swap it to with another reader to take on instead. We may not patronise our Listeners by giving them access only to “suitable” material.
8. The Recorder will hand you a microphone to clip to your clothes. This should be attached about a handspan from your mouth. Please check that the microphone and its lead do not brush against the table, papers or any jewellery when you lean forward as this will cause noises which will interfere with the recording. The Recorder will then ask you to read a few phrases so that they can set your sound level for the recording.
9. It is the responsibility of **Reader 1** to fill in the Introduction Sheet for that day with the names of those involved in the recording. The editors should have filled in their own names and the duplicator/distributors names can be found from the rota, which is fixed to the inside of the equipment cupboard door. Reader 1 should check if there is a Magazine recording for that week (nearest Thursday to the beginning of each month) in which case ensure that the Magazine is mentioned at the start and end of the recording. It should not be mentioned on other weeks. Check also that the dates of the paper is correct and that the lead story agrees with the item in their folder.
10. When everyone is ready, the Recorder will signal Reader 1 to begin reading the opening announcement from introduction sheet, followed by the front page story from their folder.
11. Reader 1 will have said who the Readers are for that recording in the introduction but each Reader should say “hello” and introduce themselves by name before reading their first item.
12. Hand over at the end of each article with a clear hand signal to the next Reader. This is also the cue for the Recorder to switch the microphones on the mixer.

13. The Readers change after every item. Short pieces that relate to each other (e.g. brief crime reports or letters) can be read together. Some long stories may be split by the Editors between 2 (or even 3) Readers. Please ensure that these are read consecutively.
14. Make sure you have a **clear breath pause between stories**, to make the separation clear to the Listener.
15. Avoid making any controversial comment on the items you read, although an occasional light-hearted remark may be acceptable.
16. Please do your utmost to **avoid any extraneous noises**, i.e. talking, coughing, fidgeting, clinking jewellery etc, when you are not speaking. It can be distracting to the other Readers and their mics can still hear you, which means that so can the Listeners!
17. There is no time restraint on the recording so all items can be read. If you find you still have items to read, please check that other Readers have not run out of material – share what there is.
18. When all items have been read Reader 1 will end the session as indicated on the Introduction Sheet and everyone says “Goodbye”.
19. **We try to run through the recording in a single “take”**, but in an emergency (coughing fit etc.) the Recorder can stop the recording so that you can go back and start again as from before the incident.
20. Please tidy away your news clippings into your folder, put the folder in the tray and **leave the room promptly and quietly**. The trickiest technical element of the recording is done at this point, and the Recorder will appreciate a quiet few minutes to do it before the Duplicator and Distributor get to work.
21. **Reader number 2** is responsible for returning the files, tray, and “Quiet Please” notice, to the equipment cupboard ready for the following week.

Reading for the Listener

1. The most important thing to remember when you read for a Talking Newspaper is that **you are reading the paper aloud to a friend**. Forget “the Listeners” – everyone who hears our recording listens as an individual, a single person hearing you talking to them. Just reading to the colleague sitting opposite you at the recording session should get it right.
2. **Preparation is critical**. The more you have prepared, the better your recording will be. Make sure you have time to read through everything you are going to read aloud and check for unfamiliar names or unclear text production. Don't just scan the items: read them word for word to make sure you can read them accurately and with understanding. Check, too, for dodgy grammar and misprints which can throw you when you come to voice them.
3. Remember that your eyes and brain process the information on the page much faster than you can speak it. As a result, the temptation is to speak quickly, which can be hard work for the Listener to follow. **It is important to read unhurriedly and clearly** so that the Listener can hear and understand the story.
4. **Breathing** is important. You need enough breath to carry your voice through a sentence – short breaths mean the voice gives out, which may make you pause or stress inappropriate words, distorting the sense. Make sure you are sitting up straight to read to give your chest room to expand and hold a good breath.
5. **Clear speech uses your whole mouth**: tongue, teeth and lips, which must move, perhaps more than you think, to enable you to read clearly. Rushing or “swallowing” words leads to unclear delivery. Be aware that not all our Listeners have perfect hearing to start with.
6. **Smiling**, or frowning, can be heard as well as seen – as your face reacts to the story your response will be reflected in your voice for the Listener.
7. **Try to vary the pace and stress of your reading**: it helps the Listener understand. You do it in conversation intuitively – try to make your reading sound as natural as that. Avoid a steady-paced, monotonous delivery... you risk sending the Listener (and possibly your fellow Readers) to sleep!
8. You can re-read at a glance, **your Listener only has the one chance** to understand what they hear. When you read through the text first, think about how you will stress the words to make the most sense.

There are three ways of **emphasising** a word or phrase:

- a. Pause – either before, to command attention; or after, to let it sink in.
 - b. Stress – speak louder and with more ‘punch’.
 - c. Sustained tone – ‘stretch’ the word (as if you were singing it).
9. **Numbers** can be confusing. If the piece you are reading contains percentages, generally round them to the nearest whole number. Only bother with decimals if the story hinges on the precise difference between two figures. You will often find that the sense is better conveyed by using fractions instead (e.g. read “68%” as “just over two thirds”) – people have an immediate mental image of two thirds, but may take time to grasp 68%.

Take particular care to speak slowly when reading out **addresses, or email addresses**. **Telephone numbers** should be read **slowly and repeated**.

10. **Pictures:** Describing any pictures accompanying the text can bring a piece to life. Don't just read the caption (it's probably only a repeat of words from the text anyway): **tell the Listener what you can see.** It's like looking out of the window at something out of your friend's view. What can you see? If you have to describe a picture which *is* the story (as in "Picture of the Week"), it helps to scribble a few strategic words on the picture itself, to remind yourself of the key features to mention. Try to evoke the mood of the picture.
11. Please do your utmost to **avoid any paper rustling** or brushing against mic leads – our microphones are very sensitive and pick up the sound, making it difficult for the Listener to hear what is being read. **Handle papers as little as possible** – they are noisy!
12. Be aware while you are reading that **any movement or touching of the mic** or its lead will be heard by the Listener as interference.

Finally:

Please don't be offended if the Recorder asks you to... slow down, speak up or keep still – the Recorder is the only Listener present in the room and it is their job to ensure the recording is audible and intelligible. Please act on their advice.

If there are "noises off" (things beyond your control such as fireworks, people shouting in the street, engines revving loudly etc) please apologise and explain these to put the Listener's mind at rest before you continue reading.

Listen to a recording of yourself every time you read... It's revealing to hear what you sound like to the Listener, and you can also learn from hearing other people read what works well and what doesn't.

You can listen to the recording online via our website. Go to www.dorkingtalkingnewspaper.org.uk and select "listen here for latest recording" to hear the programme. It is usually available by early in the week following production.