

## RESEARCH, WRITE, & EDIT A SCRIPT FOR A PODCAST EPISODE

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### STEP 1: MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE PARAMETERS FOR YOUR PODCAST EPISODE

Take the time to read through the podcast prompt so you thoroughly understand what you are being asked to do. Remember that this is a contest and entries are judged using a rubric. Our Law Day webpage has a more detailed rubric, but here's the criteria for which each entry will be judged:

- **Purpose:** The topic is narrow, focused, creative, and original.
- **Point of View:** The episode offers a strong, well-reasoned point of view and addresses any alternative perspectives.
- **Research:** The podcase demonstrates a deep understanding of the topic backed by relevant evidence and analysis and includes a variety of sources and voices.
- **Flow:** The recording has a logical and organized flow with a clear and strong beginning, middle, and end.
- **Delivery:** The recording is well-rehearsed, smooth, and conversational.
- **Production:** The recording has no background noise, and includes volume, transition, integration of music, clips, and sound effects that enhance the production value.

### STEP 2: DEFINE YOUR PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

- **Choose your main topic or theme:** What will your episode be about? What message or story do you want to share? Consider writing a working tagline for your topic to help keep your research focused.
- **Decide your goal:** What do you want listeners to understand, feel, or do after the episode? Do you want to inform, persuade, entertain, and/or inspire?
- **Identify your audience:** Who will listen? Adults? Teens? A general public audience? Why should they care? What do you want them to feel or learn?

#### EXAMPLE:

- **Topic:** How local sports bring communities together
- **Goal:** To show how teamwork and volunteering build connection
- **Audience:** Teens and adults interested in community stories

#### TIPS ON CHOOSING A TOPIC

Below are some approaches for helping you choose your podcast topic. Once you've gone through these brainstorming exercises, decide what idea excites you the most and /or what story or question you want your audience to think about.

- Think about your personal connection to the topic and why it matters to you
- Write 3 or 4 questions that come to mind when you think about the topic and then decide which question seems most interesting to you

- Connect the topic to current events – local, national, or global
- Think about the interview angle; who could you talk to and what perspective could they bring?
- Consider any historical connections to the topic and how the tie to your current life

### STEP 3: CONDUCT RESEARCH

Please note that technical information for how to conduct research can be found in the document called *Resources for Researching & Recording Your Podcast* on the Law Day page of our website.

#### IDENTIFY RELIABLE SOURCES

- Use primary sources when possible: laws, government documents, speeches, interviews, or firsthand accounts.
- Use secondary sources for interpretation: scholarly articles, verified news, and expert commentary.
- Check credibility by asking: Who created it? Why was it made? When was it published? Is it supported by evidence?
- Take organized notes using categories such as History, Key People, Major Events, Current Debates.

#### FIND EXPERT VOICES

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- Identify people you can interview: teachers, local leaders, professionals, or community members with direct experience.
- Gather Audio and Multimedia Sources
- Keep time stamps, links, and source info for each clip to cite them later.

#### ORGANIZE YOUR FINDINGS

Create a research log or spreadsheet to track:

- Source title and author
- Type (article, clip, interview, etc.)
- Key ideas and quotes
- How you might use it in your episode
- Citation details

This makes it easier to fact-check and script your episode later.

### STEP 4: CREATE A WORKING OUTLINE

A 6–12-minute episode works well in three segments:

- 1) Introduction (1–2 min) – Grab the listeners’ attention, introduce the topic, set expectations

- 2) Main Story (4–8 min) – Tell the main story including facts, examples, news clips, historical clips, and/or interviews
- 3) Conclusion (1–2 min) – Summarize key ideas, reflect, and/or present a call to action

## STEP 5: PLAN THE CONTENT EACH SEGMENT

Write bullet points for what happens in each section and decide what content you will include:

- Host narration
- Guest interviews
- Sound clips or music
- Facts, quotes, or storytelling moments

### EXAMPLE:

- **Segment 1:** Host intro, short story about a local teen athlete
- **Segment 2:** Interview with a coach or volunteer
- **Segment 3:** Reflection on how sports build empathy and teamwork

## STEP 6: WRITE CONVERSATIONALLY

- Write in the way people actually talk using natural spoken language
- Write exactly what you plan to say (or outline if you prefer more flexibility to ad lib)
- Use short sentences and contractions
- Include:
  - Notes for music or sound effects (e.g., fade in background music)
  - Labels for speakers (e.g., “HOST:”, “GUEST:”, “NARRATOR:”)
  - Notes for pauses or emphasis (pause, slowly, excited tone, etc.)

## STEP 7: BRING YOUR EPISODE TO LIFE

Once you’ve drafted an outline, think about how to transform the information into an engaging story. Great podcasts don’t just present information—they make listeners care.

- **Tell a Story:** Use your research to build a narrative arc: Introduce a problem or question, add tension or surprise with real examples or voices, end with insight, resolution, or a call to action. Use humor, emotion, or vivid language to hold listener interest and keep the tone authentic
- **Use Real Voices:** Include short audio clips, quotes, or sound bites from interviews or historical recordings to give your episode energy and credibility.
- **Paint a Picture with Sound:** Think about sound design: music, ambient sound, or short clips that set a scene. For example: Use crowd noise, weather sounds, or background audio to make listeners feel present in the moment.

- **Make Complex Information Simple:** Use your research to explain lofty ideas in plain language. Add short examples, comparisons, or metaphors to make facts more relatable. For example: “Think of the Constitution like a rulebook that keeps the game fair for everyone.”
- **Connect Emotionally:** Share personal stories or interviews that reveal why the topic matters to real people.
- **Create a Relatable Flow:** Use strong transitions (“Let’s dig deeper...” or “That reminds me of...”); Mix facts, interviews, and personal reflections; Make sure your story or argument builds logically and ends with a clear message or resolution.

## STEP 8: TIME AND REVISE

- Read your script out loud while timing it. A good rule of thumb is that 1 minute  $\approx$  125–150 spoken words
- Adjust pacing, shorten long sections, and check transitions to fit the 6-to-12-minute window

## STEP 9: ADD AUDIO & EDITING NOTES

- Add notes for your editing
- If you’re using interview clips, note where each will go

### EXAMPLES:

- Insert ambient sound of cheering at a game
- Lower background music volume
- Insert clip of MLK “I Have a Dream” speech — 10 seconds
- Pause for emphasis

## STEP 8: REVIEW AND GET FEEDBACK

Once you have a draft script, it’s smart to get another person’s perspective — a friend, mentor, parent, or even another student creator. They might notice things that you missed. To help guide the review, share these questions with your reviewer, and use their feedback to edit your script.

- **Message:** How can you make your message stronger and/or more engaging?
- **Clarity:** What ways can you make the episode confusing or hard to follow?
- **Flow:** What ways can I adjust the flow of the episode so that it makes the most sense?
- **Podcast rubric:** When looking at this episode using the podcast rubric, what changes can be made to the podcast to meet the highest score for each criterion?

## SAMPLE SCRIPT (10–12 MINUTE EPISODE)

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**Podcast Topic:** Small Town Voices

**Episode Title:** The Team Beyond the Field

**Length:** ~1,500 words (~12 minutes)

[Upbeat acoustic music fades in]

HOST (Riley):

Welcome to Small Town Voices, the show where we explore stories that make communities stronger. I'm Riley Carter.

Today's story isn't about professional athletes—it's about a group of middle school students who turned an empty parking lot into a soccer field and built something even bigger than a team: a community.

[Music fades out]

A few months ago, I saw kids playing soccer on a cracked lot behind the library. No nets, no uniforms, just sneakers and laughter. It made me think about how teamwork starts in the simplest places—and how it connects us to generations before us.

[Sound effect: soccer ball kick and laughter]

HOST:

One of those players was 13-year-old Samira Ahmed.

[Transition sound: quick upbeat sting]

HOST:

Samira, you helped start the "Library League." How did that happen?

GUEST (Samira):

My friends and I didn't have a field close by, so we started playing here after school. The librarian said we could keep using the space if we cleaned up after. It kind of became our thing.

HOST:

And it grew?

GUEST:

Yeah! Now other kids join, and some parents bring snacks. It feels like everyone's part of it.

HOST:

I also talked with Coach Ben, a volunteer who helps the group twice a week.

GUEST (Coach Ben):

When I saw what they'd built, I had to help. I brought some old cones and soccer balls, but honestly, they didn't need much—just encouragement. They already had teamwork.

[Soft background music returns – light guitar]

HOST:

That teamwork isn't just about sports—it's about belonging. And that made me think of something President John F. Kennedy said more than 60 years ago.

[Historical audio clip – John F. Kennedy, 1961 Inaugural Address (public domain)]

JFK (archival): "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."

[Clip fades out under music]

HOST:

That message still fits today. The kids in Samira's neighborhood didn't wait for someone else to build a field. They built their own—and in doing so, they built community pride.

Their story shows that service and teamwork aren't old-fashioned—they're timeless.

[Sound effect: whistle, faint cheering]

HOST:

So next time you see an empty space in your town, imagine what it could become if people decided to create something together.

Because belonging doesn't start with money or permission—it starts with a small group willing to show up and share the field.

[Music swells]

HOST:

Thanks for listening to Small Town Voices.

If you liked this episode, share it with someone who's building connection in their own way.

I'm Riley Carter—see you next time.

[Music fades out completely]