



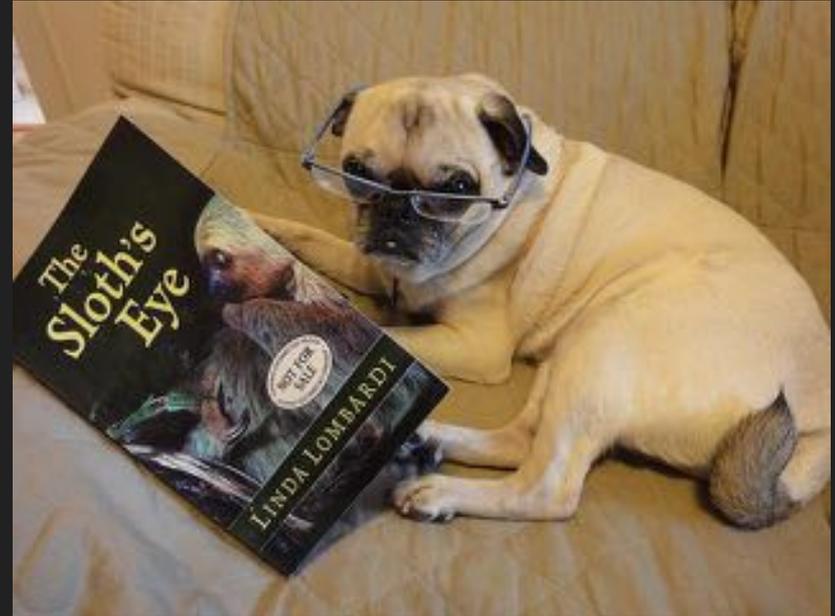
The Art of Storytelling

Credit: Fort Greene PUPS Society

Meg Wilcox // PodSummit 2017

Why is story important?

Why is story **STRUCTURE** important?



Credit: [wombatarama/](https://www.wombatarama.com/) Creative Commons

Different types of story structure

- There are infinite types... and sometimes people call the same structure different things.
- Most structures share a lot of the same elements: set-up, conflict, conclusion, denouement (and all of those other things you learned in high school English). They just tend to organize/weigh them differently.
- Just like there are several ways to tell a story, there are probably several “right” story structures that you can use for your piece. It’s about choosing one that makes sense for you... and to use it as a guide as you put your piece together.

The Whale

A CBC mainstay. The whale can work for a whole story, or just a scene. It works best when something is unfolding in real time.



Credit: [The Doc Project \(CBC\)](#)

Other types of story structure you've probably heard:

Spiral: when a story spirals around an event from different perspectives. Particularly great for mysteries and whodunnits.

The Quest (or Hero's Quest, or Hero's Journey...): when a hero or heroine is at the centre of the story, and the listener follows them on their search for a resolution. A great tool for a documentarian narrating a story they're part of.

For more information on different structures (and thoughts on them!):

CBC's The Doc Project: cbc.ca/docproject

Transom: transom.org

How Sound podcast

Steps to crafting a narrated story

1. Developing your story concept/pitch
2. Finding your sources/subjects
3. Research/interview preparation -- developing a general concept of your story
4. In-field interviews and sound gathering
5. Transcribing, going through your tape/cutting clips -- finding the **REAL** story!
6. Scripting around your sound
7. Narrating (if applicable)
8. Editing your tape/narration (likely with pickups/re-records of your narration)



Credit: [Nathan Rupert](#)/ Creative Commons

Gathering in the field

How is field recording different than recording in a studio?



Credit: [Gatto Mimmo](#) / Creative Commons

Gathering in the field gives you...

Background sound! Natural sound effects! Other sound delights!

Movement! (you can take your guest on an activity, follow them doing something, take there somewhere that ties to the subject of your interview)

Show, don't tell

Planning for the field

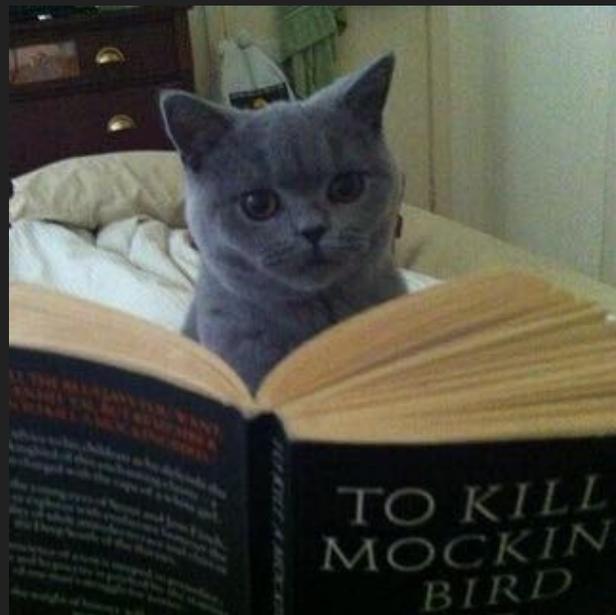
How do you usually use your tape recorded as a studio interview?

How do you usually use your tape recorded in the field to make a narrated piece?

LOCATION: where to interview -- and why? Make the place have relevance to your story or to your subject... and unless you absolutely have to be in a noisy area, avoid loud and congested places like coffee shops.

ACTION: what activities can you record to add movement, spontaneity, nat sound?

INTERVIEW: if in a loud location, do the interview somewhere quieter. You can always layer some soundbed sound under the interview after the fact to keep the person “in the scene”



Credit: [Glenn Dettwiler/CC](#)

You'll want to make sure you have:

Sound ups/ SFX: close-up sounds that you can use to create your scene

Interview: clearly recorded, well-mic'd, ideally in not too busy of a place with too many distractions

Action: record while they give you a tour, do an activity, show you something neat. You can use pieces of it in your final edit, and this is typically where your subject is more fun and comfortable.

Soundbed: at least 1 ½ min of natural sound (without you or your subject talking!) wherever your interview is taking place. This seems like a pain to collect, but you will be thanking yourself when it's time to edit.

Interviewing in the field

Get your subject to introduce themselves in a full sentence

In those action scenes, ask your subject to describe what's going on. If you're a subject in the piece (it's narrated by you) you can add some description in as well, but make sure to engage and encourage your interviewee as much as possible.

Get lots of anecdotes! Ask questions like what did _____ look like? Smell like? Describe _____... How did you react? How did it feel when _____? What happened next?

Chronology is important. Depending on how you use the tape, you might need to narrate this story. So ask lots of follow up questions to make sure you understand names, situations, timelines, etc.



You've gathered all of your tape: now what?

Organize your tape! Make a list of what you have recorded, what you think you want to use. While you're at it, organize/rename files so you can find stuff later.

Transcribe your interviews. Try a site like Voicebase or Pop Up Archive if you don't want to do it yourself.

Find your best parts, cut the clips and sound you want to use

Start to plot your story/scenes (it all comes back to structure!)

Write your script, including your narration and the transcriptions of the clips.

Setting your scene

Just like in film, you'll want to create **scenes** in your piece. You can create them with natural sound and description (narrated or through your interviewee)

You'll want to establish your scene with a bit of sound before you jump in -- either using your soundbed, some SFX, or a mix.

Your narration should set the scene, compliment your audio, and give the listeners what they need to understand -- without going too far.

Intro scene: from The Science of Everyday Life (CBC Radio One)



Credit: ATCO Blue Flame Kitchen

Writing your script

Ask yourself these questions: **What is the point/takeaway of your story?**
What is your tone as a narrator?
What is your role as a narrator?

**Your writing is only as good as you
can perform it**

Active tense

Short sentences

Keep it simple -- vocab AND explanations

Read out loud as you write



Bringing it all together

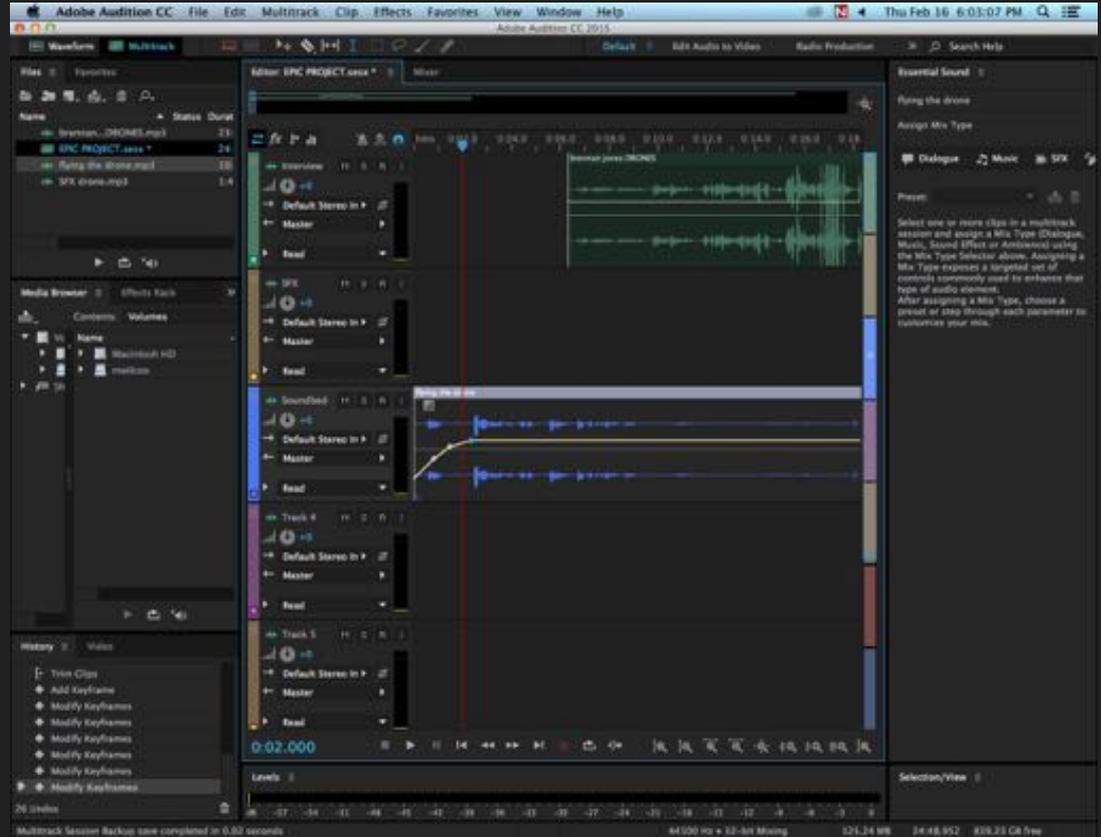
Editing:

Track 1: Narration

Track 2: Clips/interview

Track 3: Soundbed

Track 4: Music/extra sound



But I have no dreams of being an audio documentarian. How the heck is this useful to me?

Try taking your interview on location. Record a bit of activity, some SFX, and mix it in every few questions, and voila! An active interview with natural sound!

In studio, encourage anecdotes and plan for your interview considering your overall flow and story structure. You could also try adding in some natural SFX or other clips in your final edit to bring in a bit of the outside world.



Credit: [publicdomainphotos.net](https://www.publicdomainphotos.net)