

A public service announcement (PSA) is a short message, either in film, video, or audio format, which is given to radio and television stations to air. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires radio and television stations to serve “in the public interest,” so most stations use PSA’s to meet this requirement. A PSA can be an effective way to raise awareness of your issue and encourage the audience to do something.

### Basic Guidelines for PSA format

Most stations prefer 30-second spots. Television stations run on a much tighter schedule than radio stations, and if your PSA runs exactly 30 seconds, for example, the station may sometimes cut off the end. If you're writing a television PSA, you'll want to keep the announcer's copy 2 or 3 seconds shorter than the entire length of the PSA.

Length of PSA	10 seconds	15 seconds	20 seconds	30 seconds
Number of Words	20-25 words	30-35 words	40-50 words	60-75 words

### An Effective PSA

To be effective, a PSA must have a clear objective, and be designed for and tested with a specific target audience. It should have a number of features including an appropriate type of appeal, an appropriate messenger, credibility, understandability, relevance, and high quality creative execution. Another important thing to make sure of is that the PSA be distributed using channels that are suitable for the target audience and the chosen objective, and be distributed in substantial quantity/with substantial frequency to ensure that the focus audience is adequately exposed to the message.



## Additional Tips:

- Focus on the main message you want to promote, and include a “call to action.”
- Use a catchy opening sentence that poses an important question related to the subject or which states a relevant and intriguing fact.
- Use sentences that flow well and can easily be understood by the target audience.
- Don’t include too much date, time, and place information that listeners won’t retain.
- Provide contact information and repeat it at the end of the announcement.
- Pre-testing your script is always a good idea. Find some people who are members of your target audience, show them or let them read the script for the PSA, and ask them for feedback.
- Consider submitting two or three different versions of PSAs that contain essentially the same information-most TV and radio stations like a few options with different lengths.



## References:

- **Media Access Guide: A Resource for Community Health Promotion:**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/pdf/mediaaccessguide.pdf>
- **Public Service Announcements: How Can We Make Them Effective?**  
<http://web.undp.org/comtoolkit/reaching-the-outside-world/docs/Tools/PublicServiceAnnouncementsHowCanWeMakeThemEffective.pdf>