

Audio-Reader Volunteer Handbook

Alphapointe Edition, Revised February 2016



Audio-Reader Mission Statement:

The University of Kansas Audio-Reader Network exists to provide print-disabled Kansans with access to the printed word and other information via electronic media and other technologies.

Audio-Reader's services are provided to enable print-disabled Kansans the opportunity to live their lives with the greatest possible personal independence.

Alphapointe Mission Statement:

Empowering people with vision loss to achieve their goals and aspirations.



What is Audio-Reader?

Audio-Reader is an audio information service serving people who are blind or print-disabled. This includes people with vision impairments as well as other conditions that prevent them from reading normal printed materials. We broadcast across Kansas and parts of Missouri 24 hours a day, seven days a week via closed circuit radios. Our signal is carried on subcarriers through six Kansas Public Radio stations; four High Plains Public Radio stations; KCKS in Concordia, KS; KRPS in Pittsburg, KS; KXCV in Maryville, MO; KRNW in Chillicothe, MO; and KCUR in Kansas City, MO. We are also available on Smokey Hills Public Television, KOOD-TV in Bunker Hill and KMG-TV in Colby, KS, and KMOS-TV in Sedalia, MO. Additionally, we stream live on the internet and our radio programs are available in a one-week archive (www.reader.ku.edu/archive.) Our listeners receive this signal free of charge via a special radio given to them when they become subscribers to the Audio-Reader service. You can access our Program Guide at www.reader.ku.edu or listen at www.reader.ku.edu/archive.

In addition to the radio, Audio-Reader has a dial-in newspaper service called Lions Telephone Reader. Telephone Reader allows listeners to hear recordings of the *Kansas City Star*, *Topeka Capital-Journal*, *University Daily Kansan*, *Joplin Globe* and other publications on-demand. Listeners receive a local phone number or toll-free number to access these recordings. Volunteers can also read remotely if they wish. For a six-minute demo, you can call 1-800-335-1221 and enter code 5887 when prompted.

Audio-Reader also provides special request recordings, live audio description of theatre performances in the Lawrence, Kansas City and Topeka areas and a sensory garden designed to appeal to the visually impaired. For more information about helping with these opportunities, contact Jen Nigro at (785) 864-4604 or jnigro@ku.edu.

The Alphapointe Partnership

You have volunteered to read newspapers for our Alphapointe location. This partnership was started in 2008 to provide Kansas City metro newspapers to listeners in the Kansas City area during our regional news broadcast from 2-4 p.m. weekdays. Prior to this relationship, Kansas City-area listeners, who receive Audio-Reader via satellite, were hearing newspapers from central and western Kansas. Volunteers record two hours from metro newspapers each weekday. The file is uploaded to a server at KCUR, then inserted into the signal going to Kansas City listeners during the regional news time period.

Obtaining Service

People who want to subscribe to Audio-Reader fill out a short application form for the services they're interested in. A medical professional certifies their disability. This form can be requested by calling 785-864-4600 or visiting www.reader.ku.edu.

Every other month, radio service listeners receive a program guide in either large print or Braille. This guide lists a daily schedule of programs and readers. Feel free to ask for an Audio-Reader Program Guide any time to familiarize yourself with the material we provide.

Audio-Reader's Volunteers



Approximately 400 volunteers provide the backbone for the Audio-Reader Network. Our youngest started reading at age 11, our oldest is more than 90 years old. They include teachers, doctors, lawyers, business owners, ministers, homemakers, retirees, students and more. We have volunteers who live in Lawrence, Kansas City, Topeka, even Paola, Ottawa, Tonganoxie, Tecumseh and Wamego. Some read from home, but most come to the Audio-Reader studios. We also have a contingent

of volunteers in Pittsburg, Kansas who read regional newspapers from studios at the Homer Cole Center, and of course, you, our Alphapointe volunteers, in Kansas City. Most Audio-Reader volunteers have no professional broadcasting experience, but each must pass a difficult audition to become a reader. Some volunteer their time once a week, others several times a week or even every day. Regardless of their time commitment, their dedication to helping Audio-Reader bring the printed word to life for the blind and print-disabled of Kansas and western Missouri is unbeatable.

Reading at Alphapointe

Although your broadcast of regional news will be recorded, the session will be treated very much like a live reading. Due to time constraints, you will not have the opportunity to go back and correct every mistake; however, you should correct major problems. Each reader will read for a full hour, covering the highlights from two current newspapers. It is important to remember the following points:

1. Arrive on time! Because we are coordinating two readers and one studio, you will need to keep with your scheduled time. If you do need to make a change, contact Sharon Brown at sbrown@alphapointe.org or 816-237-2026.
2. Be sure to sign in on the volunteer log and note which newspapers you are using on the reading log in the volunteer area.
3. Prepare your material. You will need to go through each of the newspapers provided to you and highlight articles to read.
 - Choose current newspapers whenever possible—no more than a week old (unless it is a monthly publication).
 - Focus on local news—our listeners will hear state and national during other timeslots. If news from another part of the metro is included use it only if you need it to fill time.
 - The amount you need will depend on the number of newspapers available. If you have two newspapers for your hour, you will need about 30 minutes of copy from each paper.

- It is helpful to place page continuations directly behind the first page of the article. Some volunteers also find it helpful to number their articles and continuations to make them easier to find.
 - If there is still current or evergreen content left that could be used by another volunteer in the case of a newspaper shortage, mark out the articles you have read and put it in the designated tray in the volunteer area. Other papers can be recycled.
4. Get your water or coffee before you start recording and set it in a safe place. If your throat becomes dry during a broadcast, turn away from the microphone when you take a drink.
 5. Arrange your newspaper on the table and position your microphone correctly. Wear headphones when available.
 6. Never editorialize! You may make appropriate transitional remarks, but do not comment or use the tone of your voice to indicate your personal views.
 7. Make your reading style appropriate to the material, but don't be overly dramatic.
 8. When reading obituaries, give the name of the deceased, their age, city or town and the date of their death. If they passed away in another locale, you may list a local connection. It can be helpful to underline this information before you begin reading.
 9. Be sure to identify editorials on the opinion page.
 10. Avoid rustling the pages of the newspaper as much as possible.
 11. If you have a sudden coughing fit, need to sneeze or lose your voice while reading, you may hit the pause button while you recover. If you find you cannot continue, please notify a staff member right away.
 12. Repeat the title and date of each newspaper when you introduce each paper and when you finish it.

Uploading the Audio File

If you are the second reader, you will save the file. Reader #1 on the following day will upload it. You will receive specific training on how to do this. Written instructions are next to the computer in the broadcast room.

Weekends, Holidays and Inclement Weather

Alphapointe volunteers will not report any time Alphapointe's campus is closed. This includes weekends, holidays and inclement weather days.

Audio-Reader Absence Policy

Our listeners rely heavily on you to bring them the news and information from their communities. For many, your recording will be the one bright spot in their day.

Audio-Reader is also a unique volunteer experience, in that you are solely responsible for getting your assignment read. At least one of our listeners is waiting for you specifically to complete that assignment.

If you find it necessary to miss your appointed reading day at Alphapointe, please email the volunteer contact list provided to you when you start. This list will be updated any time the volunteer pool changes. When you respond to a sub need, please reply all to the list so everyone knows whether it has been covered.

If you miss your scheduled recording without notifying us, a staff member will attempt to contact you via phone and email. If we receive no response and you no call/no show a second time, we will send a letter notifying you that you have been removed from your regular reading assignment. You will be given the option to return on a trial basis as a substitute reader if you wish.

Vacations and Leaves of Absence

From time to time, a volunteer may need to miss several weeks in a row. This can be for a variety of reasons, including a medical condition, family emergency, changes in job or school-related activities or travel. If you determine you need to take a leave of absence, please notify Sharon Brown as soon as possible. If you can, please let us know approximately how long you will be away. This will determine whether we use a substitute reader for your broadcast or assign a new reader to it.

Reading Techniques

(excerpted from [How to Speak the Written Word](#) by Nedra Newkirk Lamar; published by Fleming H. Revell Co., copyright 1934, 1939, 1945.)

The ability to read intelligently and intelligibly is both a science and an art. Good oral readers are always applying certain principles, whether consciously or unconsciously.

A reader, to be successful and pleasing, should first of all have a thorough understanding of the selection he is to read. If he loves it and enjoys it, this is still better. But above all, he must understand it. Surely no one will deny that this is the first essential. But the second requirement is equally important: the knowledge of how to express the meaning that he may see ever so clearly. And that involves a knowledge of where to pause and where not to pause, what to emphasize and what to subdue, and other points which will be discussed in this book.

Good, plain, honest mistakes are easier to listen to and forgive than artificial, mannered reading.

The greatest fault and the most prevalent among oral readers is unnaturalness, in the form of stilted, dramatic, oratorical or old fashioned elocutionary affectations.

What to Emphasize

Meaningful emphasis and natural phrasing are the two qualities employed by radio speakers who read from a prepared script but sound as if they are ad libbing or speaking the words just as they come to thought. Either consciously or unconsciously they employ certain principles of emphasis and phrasing.

Simple Contrast

The whole secret of meaningful, and therefore natural, emphasis lies in stressing the word that carries the through, the meaning word. To put it more fully: emphasize the new idea or the contrast; subdue the old idea.

As Lewis Carrol said, "My rule for knowing which word to lean on is the word that tells you something new, something that is different from what you expected."

Any word you can leave out without changing the meaning you need not and should not stress.

Examples of Proper Word Emphasis

Read these sentences aloud: "Florence is my sister. I love Florence." You probably stressed the first Florence and sister. But surely you didn't stress the second Florence, because it is now an old idea. Instead, if you read it naturally, you subdued the second Florence and stressed love, which is the new idea. The second Florence is so obvious that the more natural thing to say would be "Florence is my sister. I love her."

Frequently the 'new idea' is more than just a new idea: it is a definite contrast. "Honesty is the best policy: dishonesty, therefore, should be avoided." Here, dishonest would naturally receive the greatest stress of any word in the sentence, because it is not only a new idea but a pointed contrast to honesty.

Readers are more likely to emphasize too many words than too few.... Stressing all the words in a sentence is like underscoring all the words in a letter: when you have done so you might as well not have stressed or underscored any of them. You are back on a level of no emphasis at all.

First time Ness

There is one outstanding characteristic of the actor who reads lines naturally or the announcer who reads a radio script as if he were just talking. This is what has been called 'first time ness.' This means the quality of sounding as if you were saying the words for the first time, as if neither you nor anyone else had even thought them before.

Parenthetical Expressions

Most people understand that a parenthetical expression should be read in a much lower tone of voice than the rest of the sentence. This is true whether the parenthetical expression is set off by parenthesis, by dashes or by commas.

For example:

- "He was, I should say, about sixteen years old."
- "You have come to be-- if I may say so-- no longer necessary to our group."
- "We have found her to be (and I'm now quoting your favorite author) unlearned in the world's false subtleties."

The words set off by commas in the first sentence, by dashes in the second and by parenthesis in the third, are all parenthetical expressions and should be read in a lower tone of voice or 'thrown away' as actors say.

Phrasing

A phrase is a group of related words that conveys a thought. Almost every sentence contains one phrase or more, and after some of these the reader should pause.

A PHRASE IS A GROUP OF RELATED WORDS THAT CONVEYS A
THOUGHT.

A PAUSE IS A SHORT PERIOD OF SILENCE THAT FOLLOWS A SPOKEN
WORD OR PHRASE.

A phrase serves three purposes. Its first and most obvious function is to give the reader an opportunity to breathe. In conversation we breathe comfortably and frequently without even thinking about it, because we breathe at the natural phrasing places, that is, at the ends of ideas. But sometimes an unpracticed reader fails to breathe at the natural place and then finds himself having to stop for breath at a most inappropriate point.

The second function of the phrase is to give the reader an opportunity to look ahead to see what he is to read next. During the pause following the first phrase he is not only taking a new breath, if he needs to, but also quickly scanning the sentence to the end of the next small thought. Then he reads that thought aloud, then pauses to look ahead through the next phrase, and then reads it in turn.... In a way, pauses are almost as important as the words...

The first two functions of the phrase or the pause are for the benefit of the reader; the third is for the audience's benefit: the audience hears the reader, or grasps his meaning, during his 'flashes of silence' instead of while he is speaking... Not only does the pause help to bring out the meaning; a well placed pause sometimes heightens the effect of a reading as nothing else could.

Don't phrase (just) because of punctuation. You don't look to the punctuation for your phrasing; you look to the punctuation for meaning; then you look to the meaning for the phrasing.

Quotations

Don't let anyone persuade you that you are supposed to stop and wait before and after a quotation. You don't have to signal to your hearers that a quotation is coming or has just ended. When reading you should be thinking about the sense, not about the punctuation, as you do not think in terms of punctuation marks when you are just talking.

(Slight pauses and changes in your intonation are sometimes helpful and effective when reading quotations.

Italics

As a general rule, italicizing a word indicates that the idea it carries is important; therefore, the word should be emphasized appropriately in your reading.

(In regard to good oral reading:) Always let common sense and good taste be your final test.

Studio Techniques

Before you begin recording or go on the air for a live broadcast, please remove any jewelry, such as loose bracelets or beeping watches, which could produce distracting noises during your broadcast. Turn off cell phones.

Be sure to arrange your book, magazine or newspaper so that it is accessible and easy to handle. If possible, hold your reading material slightly raised in front of you. (If you are recording, you may wish to use the “book butler” provided in each studio.) At this angle, your head will be tilted enough to allow your throat muscles to relax. This position will also open your airway so that your voice will carry better.

Special Questions of Format

In addition to good reading and pronunciation techniques, there are miscellaneous aspects of form that must be considered as well.

QUOTATIONS: Quotations should generally be indicated by the inflection of the voice, or by phrases such as “Mr. Weinberger said” or “she said” in the text of the book or article.

EDITORIALIZING: It is unacceptable to offer personal comments regarding the material you are reading. As a volunteer broadcaster, your task is to read the written word as the author has presented it. Please refrain from editorializing so that our listeners remain free to form their own opinions about the material.

CENSORSHIP: Another type of editorializing is censorship. Just because the author’s choice of words may seem offensive to you, under no

circumstances should you change or omit words because of your personal values. Again, your task is to read the words as they have been written. If a book or article contains language that you find offensive, you may choose not to read this material.

PICTURES: Pictures and the accompanying captions may enhance a newspaper or book broadcast. Thus, photos and diagrams may be described when it seems appropriate. It may be helpful to write or plan the description so that your commentary sounds smooth and professional.

BYLINES: Our listeners have commented that they appreciate hearing bylines given in newspaper and magazine articles. Thus, we recommend that you read the name of the writer whenever it is given.

DATELINES: An AP or other news service story is often prefaced by the “dateline,” which simply states the name of the city and/or country from which the article is being reported. While reading the dateline is not mandatory, it is probably a good idea to read it in most cases. Sometimes the text of the article will make vague references to the dateline, like “the shooting occurred here today,” so it is often helpful to have mentioned the location.

Feedback and Evaluations

As an Audio-Reader volunteer you will receive feedback from the Lawrence staff on your readings. Someone from the Lawrence office will send feedback soon after you start reading. All volunteers will be evaluated periodically and given the opportunity to complete a self-evaluation periodically. This is done to ensure ongoing quality for our listeners. If at any time you have a concern about your reading or format for your broadcast, please ask—we are more than happy to take a listen and give you some feedback! Below are the evaluation guidelines used in evaluations. 1 is least desirable while 5 is most desirable.

Emphasis is the stressing of certain words or ideas and subduing of others to make the meaning of the work more clear. New or contrasted ideas are generally emphasized. Ideas that have already been

introduced in the piece or those that are less important are generally subdued.

1= Reader places either no emphasis on any words, causing a monotone reading style, or emphasizes each word, sounding closer to shouting.

2= Reader reads in sing-song voice, not stressing anything in particular, but not monotone.

3= Reader clearly attempts to emphasize certain words, but sounds forced or emphasizes words that should be subdued or subdues words that should be emphasized.

4= Reader seems to grasp the concept of emphasis and generally emphasizes the correct words or ideas, though not always.

5= Reader's emphasis makes the meaning of the work more clear. New ideas and contrasts are stressed, old ideas are subdued all of the time.

Phrasing is the use of pauses between words and ideas to make the meaning of the work more clear.

1= Reader runs all of their words together, never stopping, or puts a significant pause between each word or idea.

2= Reader reads for the amount of available breath, only stopping to breathe, not concentrating on the meaning.

3= Reader attempts to leave pauses in places, but they seem mostly misplaced.

4= Reader seems to grasp the concept of phrasing, and generally pauses between the correct words, but may be reading strictly for punctuation rather than meaning.

5= Reader's phrasing brings out the meaning of the passage. Words and phrases that are grouped together make sense and flow properly.

Voice Quality is made up of the elements that make a reader understandable and pleasant and easy to listen to.

1= Voice has many distracting qualities (raspiness, crackling, lisp or other speech impediment, overly thick accent, high pitch, etc.) that do not enhance the work. Voice tires quickly or is generally unpleasant to listen to.

2= Voice exhibits one distracting quality or tires quickly.

3= Voice generally exhibits no distracting qualities, but tires during the middle portion of the reading. Voice also may begin to display distracting qualities as reading progresses when reader is not concentrating or suppressing them.

4= Voice exhibits no distracting qualities and only shows signs of fatigue at the end of the reading.

5= Voice shows consistent tone and quality throughout the work, and is clear and easy to understand. No distracting elements are shown throughout the entire work, and voice does not show signs of tiring, even at the end of the work.

Enunciation is the proper articulation of the words on the printed page and ensuring the words flow together in a coherent and clear manner.

1= Reader slurs all of the words together or mumbles, making it difficult to distinguish the ideas being presented.

2= Reader reads each word in a staccato or halting manner, causing distraction to the listeners.

3= Reader drops letters off words. For instance, going becomes goin', etc. or drops into colloquial phrasing, like going to becomes gonna.

4= Reader generally reads with good flow, occasionally dropping letters when not paying attention.

5= Reader is precise with words, not spending too much time on each word, but ensuring each is said properly.

Pronunciation is the way that words are usually spoken.

1= Reader mispronounces many words often stumbling further, making it difficult to understand the piece without distraction.

2= Reader mispronounces some words, stumbling quite a bit over them, taking time to regain flow.

3= Reader mispronounces foreign names or other unfamiliar words, but regains composure without continuing to stumble.

4= Reader mispronounces only extremely difficult words, but spells words out and maintains consistent pronunciation throughout.

5= Reader does not mispronounce any words and provides spelling of words with multiple pronunciations.

Speed is how fast or slow the words come out of a reader's mouth.

1= Reader is too slow as if he is having trouble getting the words out at all or reads too fast, stumbling over many words.

2= Reader reads slightly too fast or too slow, making it slightly difficult to keep up with the text.

3= Reader reads at a pace that is good for his or her voice on the radio. The listener can easily keep up with the piece, but is not impeded by the rate of speed.

Professionalism is the poise and control that the reader has over the work. The reader should transition well from article to article without offering commentary on it. The broadcast should be free of any extra noise aside from the reader's voice.

1= Reader interjects many personal comments into the work and often clears his or her throat, coughs or makes other distracting noises on air. Reader clearly does not understand the subject matter.

2= Reader often rambles between articles or during the introduction or closing of the show, many distracting noises can be heard throughout the program or reader comes across as patronizing.

3= Reader interjects some remarks or laughs at articles, but is attempting to show friendliness. Some distracting noises may be heard. Some passages may sound as though the reader does not understand the subject matter.

4= Reader keeps personal comments to a minimum, but paper rustling or other noise is heard in small amounts.

5= Reader uses good and varied transitions, sounding friendly without interjecting personal comments about the work being read. Reader clearly understands the material. There are no noises aside from the reader's voice reading.

Remember: Every time you go on the air, it may be the first time someone is listening. We want them to keep listening!

Final Note

We hope you will enjoy your time as an Audio-Reader volunteer. Many of our volunteers have been reading for 5, 10—even 35 years. Your

commitment and dedication truly make a difference in the lives of others. The time and talent you give open a window to the outside world. Thanks for taking the time to give.