Audio Editing (speech)

Some reasons for editing

- Clarity of idea (so the listener understands on first hearing)

- Conciseness
    - Removal of repetitious words or phrases
    - Removal of ums or stray words
    - Removal of information that is off-topic

- Time pressures (i.e. your programme has a maximum duration)

- Strengthening the audio – making it engaging and compelling

    - For example, you can make something into a stronger statement by removing things like "[I think that] The sky is blue", or "[I'm no expert but] I believe the sky is blue"

Editing can directly affect how listeners perceive a speaker – SO edit, but always retain the integrity of what the speaker is saying.

Also think about how much (or little) editing is appropriate for a particular piece of audio. For example, how would you edit someone with a stutter if that was an integral part of who they were?

Editing tips

- Hold on to your initial impressions of the audio. The impact will lessen once you have heard the audio a number of times.

- However, sometimes the impact of a piece of audio will only be heard once it's edited and put in some form of context.

- You can make someone sound more authoritative by removing hesitations and stumbles. However removal of too much humanity (breaths, ums, pausing, thinking time) can make the interviewee sound robotic.

- Think about the natural rhythm of the speaker. Generally keep the interviewees rhythm by editing after the breath, and just before a sound so that it helps mask changes in atmosphere.

- Note there is generally a gap between a breath and the next word. If the breath is too close it will sound unnatural.

- Use bridging words and sounds to link ideas. For example: "um, so, I think, however, but, and…"

- You can create a pause by copying and pasting a similar breath/space from elsewhere

- People breathe differently in different places, i.e. at the start of a story or between paragraphs.. make sure the breath you use sounds natural in its new context.

What makes a good edit?   One that you can't hear.

What makes a bad edit:

- Rapid changes in speech tone and speed
- Editing too tightly
- Double breathes or cut-off sounds
- Changes in background atmosphere (e.g. watch for background music when you are on location)

Beginnings and Endings

- Create a strong beginning with your audio. Make me – the listener – care about this person. Make me engaged. One technique is to do more editing at the front of an audio item so that it is very concise and then relax the editing style as you get further in.

- Create a strong ending. Know how you are going to finish and work towards that. Also note that people sometimes get quieter towards the end of sentences so you may need to manually boost the volume. Think about what will follow your audio item.

- Can answers be joined together to form longer, stronger answers?

Working with short audio clips

Think about:

- How will the audio sound as a listener is driving a car or working in the kitchen? Is the audio clear enough? Can you understand it in a noisy environment?

- Can you comprehend the audio cut on first (and possibly only) listening?

- A lot of feeling and drama is held within the spaces between words - it's not necessarily about cramming in as many words as possible.

- Get a beginning, an ending and then reduce the length of the clip by tidying up.

Working with longer interviews

- Listen through to the entire interview and make editing notes about segments of the interview (e.g. this question goes before this question, or combine those two answers together).

- After listening through to the entire interview do the BIG deletes; moving segments of audio if required. Think about structuring a clear narrative – a beginning, middle and end statement.

- Once you have placed your segments in order start doing tidy-up edits, (removing repetitions, stumbles, ums etc)

Tip: If you have access to a multi-track editor you could use two tracks – one being audio you want to keep and then the second track for material that you want to discard. The multi-track environment is also useful for moving segments around, as it generally will be non-destructive (i.e. you can always get back material you move or hide).

Early Outs

- Pre-recorded audio items sometimes need to be cut short when they are broadcast. It is useful to note "early outs" on the script for the live producer.

- An early out involves a time reference and last words:
  e.g. e/o: 2:48 "…and the sky was blue"

  Generally go for the end of a statement, which often has a downward inflection in the voice.

Things that make editing harder:

- People talking over each other

- Time locks or references in pre-recorded audio: "As I mentioned before…" or "You've just mentioned…", or external dates "What will you be doing this coming Wednesday on ANZAC day…"

- Recordings in large reverberant spaces (you will often hear the reverberation tail from a previous sound)

- Recordings with large amounts of rhythmical background sounds (like music, clocks or machinery)

<u>Advanced Editing</u>

Try editing <u>within</u> words:

- Less obvious edit points

- Masks changes of atmosphere

- Keeps the natural rhythm of the speaker

- Matches the tone of the speaker

- You can visually see the edit points

- Good sounds to edit around: b, p, c, t, s

This type of editing works very well for studio-based recordings (voice links etc).