

# Effective PSAs

## Here are some examples of effective PSAs

- "This is your brain. This is your brain on drugs. Any questions?"
- "A mind is a terrible thing to waste."
- "Friends don't let friends drive drunk."
- "You could learn a lot from a dummy."

How many of these phrases ring a bell? These widely recognized slogans have become a part of our culture. While these were all big-budget campaigns, your own PSA can be a great and inexpensive way to get your message out to the public and to change people's behaviour.

## What is a public service announcement?

- PSAs are short messages produced on video. Your PSA should be a ready-to-air, 30 to 60 second video.
- PSAs tend to be very effective at quick education -- for example: get more information on ... / have you thought about... / ... this is important.

## How do you write a PSA?

Decide upon and clarify the purpose of your PSA.

- What are your goals?
- What are you trying to say?
- Who is your audience? (High school students, teachers, parents...)

## Key points to remember about the writing:

- Because you've only got a few seconds to reach your audience (30 to 60 seconds or less), the language should be simple and vivid. Take your time and make every word count. Make your message crystal clear.
- The writing needs a "hook" to attract your audience. Creating a clever "slogan" works very well. People will remember it.
- Target your audience. What type of people are you hoping to reach through your PSA? This will help you focus on the content of your PSA.

## **Getting ready to write your PSA:**

- Choose points to focus on. Don't overload the viewer or listener with too many different messages. List all the possible messages you'd like to get into the public mind and then decide on the one or two most vital points.
- Brainstorm. This is also a good time to look at the PSAs that others have done for ideas. Get together with your friends to toss around ideas about ways you can illustrate the main point(s) you've chosen. If possible, include members of your target group in this process.
- Check your facts. It's extremely important for your PSA to be accurate. Any facts should be checked and verified before sending the PSA in. Is the information up-to-date?
- Identify a "hook". A hook is whatever you use to grab the listener or viewer's attention. How are you going to keep them from changing the channel, leaving the room or letting their attention drift when your PSA comes on? A hook could be something funny, catchy music, a shocking statistic or an emotional appeal.

## **What themes (or "hook") should I have?**

There are many "hooks" or themes your PSA could focus on. Remember, your video should have a global issue or deal with world development in some way.

## **Using music, text and other copyright stuff in your PSA**

A great PSA will not only have a striking message, but it might also have a great soundtrack that stays with it's viewers. Kind of like a song on a TV commercial. If the song is catchy, you might start to think about that product more every time you hear the song from the TV ad.

Having music in your video is a great option. You can look for "free" music, in places like [Creative Commons](#).

Here are some great places to find music (and even fonts!) for your PSA:

- Free Music Archive - Music for Video: <http://freemusicarchive.org/curator/Video>
- Creative Commons - Legal Music for Videos: <http://creativecommons.org/legalmusicforvideos>
- Open Font Library: <http://openfontlibrary.org>

## **Most importantly:**

**HAVE FUN!**

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