

FIELD REPORTING CHECKLIST

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training.npr.org/audio/get-great-sound-every-time-with-this-field-recording-checklist



Get great sound!

Field production tips

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- **Anticipate the sounds you'll hear.**
- In the field, **deconstruct the sound of the scene** and record the elements.
- **Avoid cliches** when using scene sound.
- **Look for and record movement.**
- **Find transitional sound** — something that changes.
- **Avoid music in the background** at all costs.
- **Always wear your headphones. Really.**
- **Get close, stay close.**
- **Patience is key!**
- **If you can loop ambience, it's probably boring.**
- **Omnidirectional mics** handle wind noise and p-pops well, but need to be held close to the action.
- **Shotgun mics** are prone to mic-handling noise, p-pops and wind buffeting — but focus well.
- A **high-pass filter** can sometimes help with p-pops, wind and handling noise.
- **Use wind protection** or a popper stopper.
- Record 1.5 min of room tone/ambi **with the mic in the same position as the interview.**
- **Check the recording before you leave the location!** Do you have what you need?

Here are some of the ideas on the card to help you get great sound:

Always wear your headphones. If you can't hear problems, you can't prevent them. Headphones are essential.

Anticipate the sounds you'll hear in the field. Before you leave, make a list of these sounds and keep them with you for inspiration. Once you are out in the field, deconstruct the scene into its individual elements and record them up close. For instance, a coffee shop scene might be made of cups clinking, patrons ordering and the sounds of steaming milk. Remember, actions make sound.

Look for and record movement. Read more about these ideas in “Active sound: how to find it, record it and use it.”

A great rule of thumb is, “get close, stay close.” You want to capture sounds that are specific, clear, and that will pop out of the radio. To do that, you need to get close to the sound.

Don't forget your ambience. Ambience (also called “ambi” or room tone) is probably the most commonly forgotten audio element, but it's absolutely necessary. It can be used to repair edits (no matter how quiet the space) and having enough ambi can help you build a scene. We suggest you record 90 seconds of ambience for every scene and interview you record. To ensure the sound of the ambience matches the interview perfectly, keep your microphone in the same place it was in during the interview and don't adjust levels on the recorder.