
Announcers

(O*NET 27-3011.00, 27-3012.00)

Significant Points

- Competition for announcer jobs will continue to be keen.
- Jobs at small stations usually have low pay, but offer the best opportunities for inexperienced announcers.
- Applicants who have completed internships or have related work experience, and those with computer skills, may have an advantage in the job market.
- Employment is projected to decline.

Nature of the Work

Radio and television announcers perform a variety of tasks on and off the air. They announce station program information, such as program schedules and station breaks for commercials, or public service information, and they introduce and close programs. Announcers read prepared scripts or make ad lib commentary on the air, as they present news, sports, the weather, time, and commercials. If a written script is required, they may do the research and writing. Announcers also interview guests and moderate panels or discussions. Some provide commentary for the audience during sporting events, at parades, and on other occasions. Announcers often are well known to radio and television audiences and may make promotional appearances and do remote broadcasts for their stations.

Announcers at smaller stations may cover all of these areas and tend to have more off-air duties as well. They may operate the control board, monitor the transmitter, sell commercial time to advertisers, keep a log of the station's daily programming, and produce advertisements and other recorded material. Advances in technology make it possible for announcers to do some work previously performed by editors and broadcast technicians. At many music stations, the announcer is simultaneously responsible both for announcing and for operating the control board, which is used to broadcast programming, commercials, and public-service announcements according to the station's schedule. Much of the recorded material that used to be on records or tape is now in the form of digital files on computers. (See the statement on broadcast and sound engineering technicians and radio operators elsewhere in the *Handbook*.) Public radio and television announcers are involved in station fundraising efforts.

Changes in technology have led to more remote operation of stations. Several stations in different locations of the same region may be operated from one office. Some stations operate overnight without any staff, playing programming from a satellite feed or using programming that was recorded earlier, including segments from announcers.

Announcers frequently participate in community activities. Sports announcers, for example, may serve as masters of ceremonies at sports club banquets or may greet customers at openings of sporting goods stores.

Radio announcers who broadcast music often are called *disc jockeys (DJs)*. Some DJs specialize in one kind of music, an-

nouncing selections as they air them. Most DJs do not select much of the music they play (although they often did so in the past); instead, they follow schedules of commercials, talk, and music provided to them by management. While on the air, DJs comment on the music, weather, and traffic. They may take requests from listeners, interview guests, and manage listener contests.

Some DJs announce and play music at clubs, dances, restaurants, and weddings. They often have their own equipment with which to play the music. Many are self-employed and rent their services out on a job-by-job basis.

Show hosts may specialize in a certain area of interest, such as politics, personal finance, sports, or health. They contribute to the preparation of the program's content, interview guests, and discuss issues with viewers, listeners, or the studio audience.

Public address system announcers provide information to the audience at sporting, performing arts, and other events.

Work environment. Announcers usually work in well-lighted, air-conditioned, soundproof studios. Announcers often work within tight schedules, which can be physically and mentally stressful. For many announcers, the intangible rewards—creative work, many personal contacts, and the satisfaction of becoming widely known—far outweigh the disadvantages of irregular and often unpredictable hours, work pressures, and disrupted personal lives.

The broadcast day is long for radio and TV stations—many are on the air 24 hours a day—so announcers can expect to work unusual hours. Many present early-morning shows, when most people are getting ready for work or commuting, while others do late-night programs. The shifts, however, may not be as varied as in the past because new technology is allowing stations to eliminate some of the overnight hours.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Entry into this occupation is highly competitive, and postsecondary education or long-term on-the-job training is common.



Announcers may read prepared scripts or make ad-lib commentary on the air.

Trainees usually must have several years of experience in the industry before receiving an opportunity to work on the air. An applicant's delivery and—in television—appearance and style is important.

Education and training. Formal training in broadcasting from a college, a technical school, or a private broadcasting school is valuable. These programs prepare students to work with emerging technologies, a skill that is becoming increasingly important. Many announcers have a bachelor's degree in a subject such as communications, broadcasting, or journalism. High school and college courses in English, public speaking, drama, foreign languages, and computer science are valuable, and hobbies such as sports and music are additional assets.

Individuals considering enrolling in a broadcasting school should contact personnel managers of radio and television stations, as well as broadcasting trade organizations, to determine the school's reputation for producing suitably trained candidates.

Announcers are often required to complete long-term on-the-job training. This can be accomplished at campus radio or TV facilities and at commercial stations while students serve as interns. Paid or unpaid internships provide students with hands-on training and the chance to establish contacts in the industry. Unpaid interns often receive college credit and are allowed to observe and assist station employees. Although the Fair Labor Standards Act limits the amount of work that unpaid interns may perform in a station, unpaid internships are more common than paid internships. Unpaid internships sometimes lead to paid internships, however, which are valuable because interns do work ordinarily performed by regular employees and may even go on the air.

Once hired by a television station, an employee usually starts out as a production assistant, researcher, or reporter and is given a chance to move into announcing if they show an aptitude for "on-air" work. A beginner's chance of landing an on-air job is remote. The best chances for an on-air job for inexperienced announcers may be as a substitute for a familiar announcer at a small radio station or on the late-night shift at a larger station. In radio, newcomers usually start out taping interviews and operating equipment.

Other qualifications. Announcers must have a pleasant and well-controlled voice, good timing, excellent pronunciation, and correct grammar. College broadcasting programs offer courses, such as voice and diction, to help students improve their vocal qualities. Television announcers need a neat, pleasing appearance as well. Knowledge of theater, sports, music, business, politics, and other subjects likely to be covered in broadcasts improves one's chances for success. Announcers, especially those seeking radio careers, should have good infor-

mation technology skills and be capable of using computers, editing equipment, and other broadcast-related devices because new advances in technology have made these abilities increasingly important. Announcers also need strong writing skills, because they normally write their own material. In addition, they should be able to ad lib all or part of a show and to work under tight deadlines. The most successful announcers attract a large audience by combining a pleasing personality and voice with an appealing style.

Advancement. Announcers usually begin at a station in a small community and, if they are qualified, may move to a better paying job in a large city. They also may advance by hosting a regular program as a disc jockey, sportscaster, or other specialist. Competition for employment by networks is particularly intense, and employers look for college graduates with at least several years of successful announcing experience.

Employment

Announcers held about 71,000 jobs in 2006. About 42 percent of all announcers worked part time. About 54 percent were employed in radio and television broadcasting. Another 30 percent were self-employed freelance announcers who sold their services for individual assignments to networks and stations, to advertising agencies, other independent producers, or to sponsors of local events.

Job Outlook

Competition for jobs as announcers will be keen because the broadcasting field attracts many more jobseekers than there are jobs. Furthermore, employment of announcers is projected to decline. In some cases, announcers leave the field because they cannot advance to better paying jobs. Changes in station ownership, format, and ratings frequently cause periods of unemployment for many announcers.

Employment change. Employment of announcers is expected to decline moderately by 7 percent from 2006 to 2016. Increasing consolidation of radio and television stations, the advent of new technology, and growth of alternative media sources, such as satellite radio, will contribute to the expected decline. Consolidation among broadcasting companies may lead to an increased use of syndicated programming and programs originating outside a station's viewing or listening area. Digital technology is increasing the productivity of announcers, reducing the time required to edit material or perform other off-air technical and production work.

Job prospects. Some job openings will arise from the need to replace those who transfer to other kinds of work or leave the labor force. Nevertheless, competition for jobs as announcers will be keen because the broadcasting field attracts many

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-2016	
				Number	Percent
Announcers	27-3010	71,000	66,000	-4,900	-7
Radio and television announcers.....	27-3011	59,000	54,000	-4,900	-8
Public address system and other announcers.....	27-3012	12,000	12,000	0	0

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

more jobseekers than there are jobs. Small radio stations are more inclined to hire beginners, but the pay is low. Applicants who have completed internships and those with related work experience usually receive preference for available positions. Job seekers with good computer and technical skills also will have an advantage because announcers are now doing more of the computer work that was previously carried out by technicians. In radio, announcers are increasingly using computers to edit their programs. Because competition for ratings is so intense in major metropolitan areas, large stations will continue to seek announcers who have proven that they can attract and retain a sizable audience. Announcers who are knowledgeable about business, consumer, and health news also may have an advantage over others. While subject-matter specialization is more common at large stations and the networks, many small stations also encourage it. There will be some opportunities for self-employed DJ's who provide music at clubs and special events but most of these jobs will be part time.

Earnings

Salaries in broadcasting vary widely, but generally are relatively low, except for announcers who work for large stations in major markets or for networks. Earnings are higher in television than in radio and higher in commercial broadcasting than in public broadcasting.

Median hourly earnings of wage and salary radio and television announcers in May 2006 were \$11.69. The middle 50 percent earned between \$8.10 and \$18.62. The lowest 10 percent

earned less than \$6.55, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$32.98. Median hourly earnings of announcers in the radio and television broadcasting industry were \$11.52.

Median hourly earnings of wage and salary public address and other system announcers in May 2006 were \$12.02. The middle 50 percent earned between \$8.41 and \$19.38. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$6.73 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$29.69.

Related Occupations

The success of announcers depends upon how well they communicate. Others who must be skilled at oral communication include news analysts, reporters, and correspondents; interpreters and translators; salespersons and those in related occupations; and public relations specialists. Many announcers also must entertain their audience, so their work is similar to other entertainment-related occupations, such as actors, producers, and directors; and musicians, singers, and related workers. Some announcers write their own material, as do writers and editors. Announcers perform a variety of duties, including some technical operations similar to those performed by broadcast and sound engineering technicians and radio operators.

Sources of Additional Information

General information on the broadcasting industry, where many announcers are employed, is available from:

► National Association of Broadcasters, 1771 N St.NW., Washington, DC 20036. Internet: <http://www.nab.org>