



## Air Check Guidelines

When broadcasters say “air check”, they could also be referring to a “demo”. Technically an air check is an example of your on air work. If you are not on air, then the demo is a produced example of what you *would* sound like on the air, but in the business, saying air check communicates the point.

First, the talent needs to learn and do the basic fundamentals.  
For example: in a music radio show;

- Deliver the call letters/name of the station, preferably the first thing you say or the last thing you say into the song. Sell the station positioning statement/slogan.
- Introduce songs, back-announce songs if going into a spot set, but not inside a music sweep. Always think **forward momentum**. (exception being if it's a brand new song and that is reason to back announce in a sweep).
- Billboard going into the spot set.
- If you give the time, give it digitally. “5:45” not “quarter to six.”
- Talk as soon as the song begins, either on the first beat of the song or a half second in.
- Don't stop the music to talk in the middle of a sweep, talk over the intro of the song without stopping the music.
- Don't talk on the tail of one song and on the beginning of the next, that takes away music intensiveness and momentum and sometimes can create the impression of too much talk. Let the next song begin before you start talking or start talking simultaneously with the song beginning.

Over the last many years most stations encourage talent to **start every break with the call letters, and when possible, also end the break with call letters**. Some still do that. In PPM markets, many talent are coached not to do that because they know many listeners punch out in the first 4-7 seconds if you don't get their attention. So many Program Directors coach talent today to have interesting content first, delivered in a concise and interesting delivery, and then deliver the call letters/name of the station. That also means keep the music playing and everything over the music.

Most often, we still tell students to start their breaks with the name of the station/call letters. We say that because we want you to learn the basics and fundamentals and to show a potential PD/employer you know it's important to sell those call letters and that you have the discipline to do a music radio show.

The way we see it, this helps the student be impressive and if the PD doesn't require you to do the calls first, he will tell you when he hires you and can tell you how he/she wants it done at his/her station. Being disciplined and doing the fundamentals will be impressive to the Program Director, more so than having the PD wonder if this student understands the basics of good radio yet.

### **Guidelines for your air check:**

1. Realize what the Program Director is looking for and expecting to hear when listening to an air check. Begin with that in mind.

Most Program Directors can tell immediately if they like the talent and if they are going to keep listening within the first thirty seconds of the air check. If the PD is not hearing what they want or like, they stop and move on to somebody else's air check.

No need for the Program Director to listen to a four minute air check if he/she doesn't hear what he/she wants to hear in the first or second break.

2. Ideally, don't start with a weather forecast, time check or just the station name/frequency and name of the song. Those kinds of breaks can be on the air check but it's best to begin with something more interesting. Interesting content about the song or artist, a unique station contest or event sell, or something the talent has posted on facebook or social, etc. See Songfacts.com
3. Voice dynamics. Have a conversational delivery and presentation, some joy/smile in the voice, natural inflection and voice timbre to match the content; more natural and conversational on some intro's, more excited on other breaks i.e. excited - "*Did you see Justin Bieber's dyed hair, duh???*"

More conversational, "*Charlie Puth says he never wanted to perform his songs, he just wanted to write them...but, in demonstrating how he wanted his songs to be performed, he ended up becoming a star performer...One Call Away on Z 104*".

The voice is an instrument and needs to be exercised and practiced. Don't hesitate to try to mimic professional talent that you hear and like on the radio. Listen to the best, professionals on big and successful stations to condition your ear to (professionalism and) greatness. You can say and do on the air what they say and do, until you develop your own style and who you are on the air, Practice every day. With practically all radio stations streaming today, you can listen and learn from talent all over the country.

4. Keep the air check short. Two to three minutes max. Vary the break content, don't make it all song/artist. Find a couple of interesting things to say over a song intro, then maybe one break out of a song into spots which gives the talent a little

more time. But, still need to use word economy and self-edit even on the longer break.

5. When sending your air check to a Program Director, ask for advice, help, and coaching suggestions. Do something to make the PD want to reach out to you.

These are guidelines for your air check, but they are also the basics of a good radio show. If you do a good radio show, you can have a good air check.

Take note that the air check is an edited example of your work, the PD or anyone you play your air check/demo for, doesn't want to hear the songs or the commercials/underwriting/sports/news etc...they want to hear the talent and so on the air check you should only have a couple of seconds of the song that played prior and the song or event that plays next or whatever element you are going into if it's not a song. You will hear this on the example air checks.