

Section 4: Write the Video Package Script

You now have a verified news article and a video package plan. Section 4 turns that plan into the exact script your team will record and edit. The script tells the editor what the audience will see, what the audience will hear, which files to use, and about how long each part should last.

A video package script is not the written article copied into a new document. It is written for the ear and the screen. Viewers hear each sentence once while pictures keep moving, so the language must be short, clear, conversational, and connected to the visuals. The finished package should tell the same verified story as the article, but it must tell that story in a form people can easily watch and understand.

These instructions work with Microsoft Clipchamp, Adobe Premiere Pro, CapCut, or any other approved editing program. This section is about writing and organizing the package, not finding particular buttons. A complete script can be followed in any editor that uses video, audio, graphics, and a timeline.

By the end of this section, your team should have a timed two-column script with complete narration, exact sound-bite selections, planned visuals, natural sound, source identifications, graphics, pronunciations, and editor notes. Another team member should be able to read the script and understand how the package is supposed to work.

First Understand the Job of the Script

The script is the bridge between the reporting plan and the editing timeline. It prevents the editor from guessing which clip belongs next, the reporter from recording too many words, and the team from discovering important gaps after editing has already begun.

For every moment, the script must answer two questions:

- What will the audience see?
- What will the audience hear?

The video column answers the first question. The audio column answers the second. Time, filenames, timecodes, graphics, and short production directions help the editor connect the two.

Script part	What belongs there
Time	The planned beginning and ending time or estimated length of the segment.
Video	The exact B-roll, interview picture, photograph, graphic, lower third, stand-up, or other visual the viewer sees.
Audio	The exact narration, sound bite, natural sound, or approved music the viewer hears.
Source information	Filenames, interview names, titles, permissions, and exact start and end timecodes.
Production direction	A short instruction such as NAT SOUND FULL, SHOW LOWER THIRD, or FADE OUT. Directions are not spoken.

Know the Basic Script Labels

Broadcast scripts use short labels so the reporter and editor can recognize each kind of material. Your class may use these labels or write the full words. Consistency matters more than the abbreviation.

Label	Meaning	What the audience experiences
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Label	Meaning	What the audience experiences
VO	Voice-over or narration	The reporter speaks while the viewer sees other pictures.
SOT	Sound on tape or sound bite	A source is heard speaking from a recorded interview.
NAT SOUND	Natural sound	The real sound recorded with the action is heard clearly.
B-ROLL	Supporting video	The viewer sees the people, place, action, object, or evidence being discussed.
LOWER THIRD	Name and title graphic	Text identifies a source, usually near the bottom of the screen.
GFX	Graphic	A chart, map, number, date, label, or other visual information appears.
STAND-UP	Reporter on camera	The reporter appears and speaks directly to the audience.
ON CAM	Person visible while speaking	The viewer sees the person whose voice is being heard.

Do not worry if an editing program uses different words. These labels describe the storytelling pieces, not software features.

Before Writing Check the Package Plan

Open the Section 3 plan, the completed article, and the organized media folder. Confirm the package focus, target running time, story blocks, selected sound bites, visual sequences, natural-sound moments, and ending. Then verify that every planned file actually exists and opens.

- ☐ The one-sentence package focus is final and supported by the reporting.
- ☐ The assigned running time and video format are known.
- ☐ All selected sound bites have exact start and end timecodes.
- ☐ The source names and titles have been confirmed and spelled correctly.
- ☐ The planned B-roll and natural sound are usable and clearly labeled.
- ☐ Photographs, documents, logos, screenshots, and music have permission when required.
- ☐ Any missing fact, interview, visual, or sound has been gathered or removed from the plan.

If the plan depends on a clip that does not exist or a fact that has not been confirmed, stop and fix the reporting problem. Do not write around the gap as though the missing material were available.

Write for the Ear Not for the Page

A reader can stop and reread a difficult sentence. A viewer usually cannot. Write narration so it makes sense the first time someone hears it. Use normal words, one main idea at a time, and a sentence length the reporter can speak comfortably.

Video narration should usually be

- Short enough to say in one comfortable breath
- Clear when heard without looking at the written script
- Specific about people, places, actions, dates, and results
- Written in a natural speaking voice rather than an essay voice

- Active whenever possible, with a clear person or group doing the action
- Connected to the picture the viewer sees at that moment

Written for the page	Rewritten for the ear
Due to the implementation of the newly approved schedule, participating students will have the opportunity to attend additional laboratory sessions.	The new schedule gives participating students two more lab periods each week.
The program, which was established during the previous academic year, currently has approximately forty-five students enrolled.	The program started last year. About forty-five students are enrolled now.
In the event that the proposal receives approval, construction is anticipated to commence during the summer.	If the board approves the proposal, construction could begin this summer.

Do not make every sentence extremely short or choppy. Read the words aloud and listen for a natural rhythm. The goal is simple spoken language, not robotic language.

Let the Pictures Carry Part of the Story

Narration should add information the pictures cannot provide by themselves. It should not describe every obvious movement on the screen. If viewers can see a student welding, the narration does not need to say, The student is welding. It can explain what skill is being practiced, why the training is new, or what certification the work supports.

Viewer sees	Weak narration	Stronger narration
Students using new equipment	Students are using new equipment.	The new machines allow students to complete the hands-on work required for certification.
A volleyball team practicing	The team is practicing volleyball.	The Brahmanettes are rebuilding their rotation after graduating three starters.
A crowded parking line	Cars are waiting in a long line.	The new dismissal route moved parent pickup to the west entrance this week.
A student painting scenery	The student is painting the set.	The crew has six school days to finish the set before opening night.

The pictures and words should cooperate. The picture provides visual proof, action, emotion, place, or detail. The narration provides meaning, context, verified facts, and connections.

Step 1 Build the Script Skeleton

Copy the story blocks from Section 3 into a two-column script. Do not write every narration sentence immediately. First create a simple beginning-to-end skeleton showing the job of each block.

Block	Video purpose	Audio purpose
Opening	Put the viewer inside the story with meaningful action or detail.	Use natural sound and state the central news quickly.
Development	Establish the people, place, process, or evidence.	Explain what happened or what is changing.

Block	Video purpose	Audio purpose
Sound bite 1	Show the source and related action.	Add experience, explanation, expertise, or a strong reaction.
Context	Show evidence, documents, details, or a simple graphic.	Provide the important fact or background the viewer still needs.
Sound bite 2	Show a second useful perspective and matching B-roll.	Add impact, another perspective, or what happens next.
Ending	Finish on a meaningful action, result, or image.	Complete the idea and allow the final sound or picture to breathe.

This is only a starting structure. A package may use a different number of blocks. Arrange them according to what the audience needs next, not according to the order in which interviews were recorded.

Step 2 Place the Sound Bites First

Sound bites take a fixed amount of time and contain exact words that should not be rewritten. Place the selected bites into the script before writing most of the narration. Record the source, filename, exact start and end timecodes, and measured length.

Type the source's exact words into the audio column. Transcribing the bite lets the team see what it actually says, check the meaning, prepare captions, and avoid writing narration that repeats it.

Before using each bite ask

- Does the bite make sense without hearing the interview question?
- Does it contribute something better said by the source than by the reporter?
- Is it short enough to hold attention without removing needed context?
- Does the edit preserve the source's complete meaning?
- Can ordinary viewers hear and understand it?
- Does another bite already make the same point?

SOT - Jordan Lee, student - interview_jordan.mp4 - 04:18 to 04:31 - 13 seconds: I thought the certification would just be another test, but we actually practice the same steps employers use in the shop.

Leave a little extra picture and sound before and after the chosen words when editing. Never join separate pieces of an answer so they appear to be one continuous statement unless the break is clear and the meaning remains accurate.

Step 3 Write Into and Out of Each Sound Bite

The sentence before a bite is called a setup. It tells the audience enough to understand why the source is speaking. The sentence after a bite moves the story forward. Neither sentence should repeat the bite word for word.

A useful setup may

- Identify the situation or fact the source will explain
- Identify the source when the person has not already been introduced
- Give necessary context that makes the answer understandable
- Create a logical question in the viewer's mind that the bite then answers

Weak sequence	Stronger sequence
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Weak sequence	Stronger sequence
VO: Students say the new equipment gives them real experience. SOT: The new equipment gives us real experience.	VO: Students began using the equipment during second period this week. SOT: When we apply for a job, we can say we have already practiced on the same type of machine.
VO: Coach Ramirez says the team must improve communication. SOT: We need to improve our communication.	VO: Three new starters are learning to work together before district play. SOT: Right now our biggest problem is calling the ball early enough for everyone to react.

Do not write, She had this to say, or He tells us more. Tell the audience the useful fact or situation, then let the source add meaning.

Step 4 Write the Narration One Block at a Time

Now fill the spaces between the sound bites. Write only what each story block needs to accomplish. Use the verified article and reporting notes, but rebuild the information as spoken language.

1. Write one simple sentence that states the job of the block.
2. Choose the strongest verified fact needed in that block.
3. Check the planned picture and remove words that merely describe the obvious action.
4. Write the narration in short, natural sentences.
5. Read it aloud while timing it.
6. Revise until it is understandable, accurate, and comfortable to say.

If a block requires a long paragraph of explanation, it probably contains too many ideas. Divide it, support it with a useful graphic or sound bite, or remove lower-priority information.

Step 5 Attribute Information Clearly

The audience needs to know where important information came from. Attribution is especially important for claims, estimates, opinions, disputed information, rules, plans that may change, and facts the reporter did not directly observe.

In video writing, place the source early enough that viewers know who is responsible for the information. Do not make them wait until the end of a long sentence.

Unclear or awkward	Clear for the ear
Enrollment could increase by twenty percent next year, according to the program director.	The program director says enrollment could increase by twenty percent next year.
It is believed that the repair will take two weeks.	The district's maintenance director says the repair should take about two weeks.
Officials say the change will help students.	Principal Elena Ruiz says the later deadline will give students one more day to complete missing work.

Use a source's accurate name and title. Avoid vague labels such as experts, many people, or officials when the reporting identifies the actual person or record.

Step 6 Handle Numbers Dates and Names for Listening

A viewer cannot easily remember a pile of numbers. Use only the numbers needed to understand the story. Round numbers when exact precision is unnecessary, and show an important exact number in a graphic when that helps.

- Write about forty-five students when the exact count is not important; use 47 when the exact official number matters.
- Use comparisons viewers can understand: twelve more students than last year may be clearer than a percentage alone.
- Identify the month with a date when the timing could be misunderstood: Monday, October 12, not simply Monday in a package watched later.
- Spell names exactly as the source confirms them, including capitalization, hyphens, and suffixes.
- Write a pronunciation guide beside any word or name the reporter may mispronounce.
- Say abbreviations as words only when the audience will recognize them. Otherwise, write what the letters mean on first reference.

Pronunciation note for the reporter only: Kowalski - kuh-WAHL-skee. This note is not displayed or spoken as part of the story.

Step 7 Write the Opening

The opening should quickly establish the actual news and give the viewer a reason to continue. Start with the strongest meaningful picture or natural sound available. Then use a clear narration line to explain the development.

A strong opening usually does three things

1. Places the viewer in the scene through picture or natural sound.
2. States or strongly reveals the central news early.
3. Begins the specific story instead of giving a broad introduction to the topic.

VIDEO: Close shot of metal being cut, then students measuring a piece. AUDIO: NAT SOUND FULL for 2 seconds. VO: A new certification course is giving Bellville students more time on the same equipment used in local shops.

Avoid long title screens, dramatic effects, Today we are going to talk about, or a mystery opening that leaves viewers confused. Attention should come from the story, not from hiding the point.

Step 8 Write the Ending

The final lines should complete the story. Tell the audience the most useful next step, consequence, remaining question, or final verified idea. Plan a picture and sound that can remain on screen for a moment after the last spoken word.

- Do not summarize the entire package again.
- Do not introduce a major fact that needed explanation earlier.
- Do not promise an outcome the reporting cannot prove.
- Do not use empty phrases such as Only time will tell.
- Include the required reporter sign-off only if the newsroom format calls for one.

VIDEO: Student removes finished piece and checks it with the instructor. AUDIO: VO: The first group can test for certification in December. NAT SOUND rises for 2 seconds, then fade out.

Step 9 Write Exact Video Directions

The video column should be specific enough that the editor can find the right file and understand why it appears. Do not write B-roll or show students without identifying the action, filename, timecode, and planned graphic when known.

Too vague	Useful video direction
Show school	Wide exterior of CTE building - cte_ext_03.mp4 - 00:06 to 00:10.
B-roll of students	Medium shot of Maya measuring the metal, then close-up of ruler - shop_sequence_02.mp4 - 00:14 to 00:22.
Show interview	Jordan on camera for first 4 seconds of SOT; add lower third JORDAN LEE / WELDING STUDENT. Cover remaining jump cut with matching shop B-roll.
Show numbers	Full-screen graphic: 2 NEW COURSES / 45 STUDENTS ENROLLED. Verify figures against district program sheet.

Keep production directions short. Use capital letters or brackets if that helps the team distinguish directions from words that will actually be spoken.

Step 10 Plan Lower Thirds and Graphics

A lower third identifies a source with the person's name and relevant role. It should appear long enough to read, usually near the beginning of the person's first sound bite. Confirm every spelling and title with the source or an official record.

- ☐ The source's name is spelled correctly.
- ☐ The title explains why the person belongs in this story.
- ☐ The wording is short enough to read on a phone.
- ☐ The text does not cover a face, captions, or important action.
- ☐ The identification appears with the correct person.

Use full-screen graphics only when they make a fact easier to understand. Every number, date, map, score, or comparison must come from a verified source. Do not create a graphic simply to cover missing B-roll.

Step 11 Mark Natural Sound and Pauses

Natural sound needs written space in the script. If the reporter talks over every second, the package can feel rushed and the viewer never experiences the scene. Mark when natural sound is full, when it stays quietly under narration, when it rises, and when it fades.

Direction	Meaning
NAT SOUND FULL	The natural sound is heard by itself. No narration or interview covers it.
NAT SOUND UNDER	The sound continues quietly beneath narration or another voice.
NAT SOUND UP	The sound becomes louder for a brief moment between spoken lines.
FADE NAT SOUND	The natural sound gradually becomes quieter.

Do not mark every recorded noise as natural sound. Choose sounds that identify the action, create a sense of place, or help the story move. Wind, loud room noise, and unrelated conversations should not compete with important words.

Step 12 Time Every Spoken Word

Never estimate final narration time only by counting lines on the page. Read the actual script aloud at a clear, natural pace and use a timer. Include the real length of every bite, planned natural-sound moment, pause, and stand-up.

Spoken narration is often close to two words per second, but this is only an early estimate. Names, numbers, unfamiliar words, emphasis, and breathing change the time. The timed read is the measurement that matters.

1. Add the exact lengths of all sound bites and natural-sound moments.
2. Read each narration block aloud and record its actual time.
3. Add the blocks to find the estimated total running time.
4. Leave a little room for clean edits and brief visual breathing space.
5. If the package is too long, remove a lower-priority idea before speeding up the reporter.
6. If it is too short, add useful reporting or visual breathing room, not filler or repeated facts.

A Concrete Two Column Script Example

This abbreviated example shows how the opening of a school news package could be written. It is a model of organization, not a script to copy.

Time	Video what the viewer sees	Audio what the viewer hears
0:00-0:03	Close-up: saw cuts metal. shop_nat_01.mp4 00:11-00:14.	NAT SOUND FULL: saw starts and cuts.
0:03-0:12	Wide shop, then medium shot of students measuring. shop_sequence_02.mp4 00:04-00:13.	VO: A new certification course is giving Bellville students more time on equipment used in local shops.
0:12-0:16	Close-up of safety check and instructor observing.	VO: Forty-five students joined the program this fall, according to the district's enrollment report.
0:16-0:29	Jordan on camera. LOWER THIRD: JORDAN LEE / WELDING STUDENT. Cover final 3 seconds with Jordan working.	SOT - interview_jordan.mp4 04:18-04:31: I thought the certification would just be another test, but we actually practice the same steps employers use in the shop.
0:29-0:36	Sequence: instructor demonstrates, student repeats, close-up of finished joint.	VO: Instructor Elena Ruiz says each student must complete four practice projects before testing in December.

Notice that the narration does not repeat the bite. The video directions identify real material. The attribution comes before the information when needed. The picture changes with the meaning, and the natural sound receives its own time.

Write and Record a Stand Up Only When It Helps

A stand-up is a planned moment when the reporter appears on camera. It is not required merely to prove the reporter attended. Use one when the reporter can demonstrate a process, connect two locations or ideas, show scale, explain something the existing visuals cannot show, or provide a necessary transition.

Write the stand-up word for word and plan the picture, movement, location, and ending position. Keep it short enough to deliver naturally. Do not place the reporter in front of action that viewers should be seeing more clearly by itself.

STAND-UP: The reporter begins beside the old pickup entrance, walks three steps toward the new sign, and says: Starting Monday, parent pickup will move from this entrance to the west side of campus. The reporter finishes facing the new route.

Use AI Carefully While Writing the Script

AI may help shorten verified article language, suggest alternate narration, identify repetition, estimate an early word count, or review whether the script sounds clear. It may use only the facts, quotations, timecodes, and media descriptions the team provides. It cannot watch a file it has not received, verify a fact by guessing, invent a picture, create an interview quotation, or decide whether an edit preserves a source's meaning.

A useful first-draft request

AI planning prompt

Using only the verified article, approved package plan, exact sound-bite transcripts, and media inventory below, create a two-column video package script for the assigned running time. Put exact visuals and filenames in the video column. Put narration, sound bites, and natural sound in the audio column. Write narration for the ear in short, conversational sentences. Do not invent facts, quotations, footage, timecodes, names, titles, or permissions. Mark any missing information instead of guessing.

A useful review request

AI review prompt

Review this video package script without adding new reporting. Identify narration that is too long, hard to understand when heard once, repetitive of a sound bite, unsupported by the supplied reporting, weakly attributed, or disconnected from the planned visual. Check the estimated time, but remind me to verify it with a timed read aloud. List suggested changes and the reason for each change. Do not silently rewrite quotations or change facts.

The reporters must check every AI suggestion against the article, interviews, official records, and actual media files. Paste changes into the script only after a human team member verifies them. Never ask AI to make the story more dramatic, fill a missing quote, or invent something for a blank section.

Complete the Script in Three Passes

Pass	What to check
Pass 1 Story	Does the package have one clear focus, a logical order, useful source voices, necessary context, and a real ending?
Pass 2 Words and pictures	Does every narration line work with the picture? Are the video directions specific? Are bites set up without being repeated?
Pass 3 Accuracy and production	Are facts, names, titles, quotations, timecodes, permissions, pronunciations, lower thirds, graphics, and total time confirmed?

Do not attempt to solve every problem in one reading. Separate passes make missing facts, confusing language, and production gaps easier to notice.

Read the Entire Script Aloud

One person should perform the narration while another follows the script and runs the timer. Listen as an audience member who has not attended the interviews. Do not judge the script only by how it looks on the page.

- ☐ The opening establishes the news quickly.
- ☐ Every sentence makes sense the first time it is heard.
- ☐ The reporter can say the words naturally without rushing or running out of breath.
- ☐ Pronunciations, names, numbers, and dates are clear.
- ☐ Narration does not repeat what the viewer can already see.
- ☐ Narration does not repeat the next sound bite.
- ☐ Transitions clearly connect one block to the next.
- ☐ The ending feels complete rather than sudden.
- ☐ The full package fits the assigned time at a natural pace.

Revise any line that causes the reader to stumble. If the reporter has difficulty saying a sentence, the viewer will probably have difficulty understanding it.

Common Script Problems and How to Fix Them

Problem	Fix
The script sounds like an essay	Use shorter sentences, familiar words, active verbs, and a natural speaking voice.
The narration describes obvious pictures	Replace the description with meaning, context, evidence, consequence, or remove the line.
A sound bite repeats the reporter	Let the narration provide the verified fact and the source provide experience, expertise, reaction, or detail.
The package contains too much information	Return to the focus and remove facts that are not essential to the viewer's main questions.
The video column says B-roll everywhere	Name the exact action, file, timecode, sequence, graphic, and source identification.
The package is too long	Remove a lower-priority idea, shorten a bite without changing meaning, or simplify narration. Do not race through it.
The package is too short	Add needed reporting, a useful visual sequence, or a meaningful natural-sound moment. Do not repeat information.
The opening is slow or confusing	Begin with meaningful action or sound and state the real news earlier.
The ending simply stops	Write a final verified idea and plan a closing picture and sound.
AI added details	Delete anything not supported by the team's verified reporting and check the rest line by line.

Final Two Column Script Worksheet

Use as many rows as needed. Every row should contain a complete moment or story block. Add exact times after the read-aloud timing pass.

Time	Video what the viewer sees	Audio what the viewer hears
_____	Opening picture, filename, timecode, graphic, or direction: _____ _____ _____	Natural sound or opening narration: _____ _____ _____
_____	Visuals, filename, timecode, lower third, or graphic: _____ _____ _____	VO, SOT transcript, or natural sound: _____ _____ _____
_____	Visuals, filename, timecode, lower third, or graphic: _____ _____ _____	VO, SOT transcript, or natural sound: _____ _____ _____
_____	Visuals, filename, timecode, lower third, or graphic: _____ _____ _____	VO, SOT transcript, or natural sound: _____ _____ _____
_____	Visuals, filename, timecode, lower third, or graphic: _____ _____ _____	VO, SOT transcript, or natural sound: _____ _____ _____
_____	Ending picture, filename, timecode, or direction: _____ _____ _____	Closing line, sign-off if required, and final sound: _____ _____ _____

Ready to Record and Edit Checklist

The script is ready only when the team can check every applicable item.

- ☐ The script tells the same verified story as the article.
- ☐ The focus is clear from the opening through the ending.
- ☐ Every narration sentence is written word for word.
- ☐ Every sound bite is transcribed exactly and has a filename, source, timecode, and length.
- ☐ No narration line invents, exaggerates, or assumes information.
- ☐ Important claims and plans are clearly attributed.
- ☐ Every script row states what the viewer sees and hears.
- ☐ Video directions identify real, usable files and timecodes.
- ☐ Names, titles, numbers, dates, graphics, and pronunciations are verified.
- ☐ Natural sound has planned space and will not cover important words.

- ☐ The opening establishes the news and the ending completes it.
- ☐ The narration has been read aloud, revised, and timed at a natural pace.
- ☐ The complete estimated running time fits the assignment.
- ☐ A second team member has checked the script against the reporting and media files.

When every required item is complete, the team is ready to record clean narration and build the first edit. The editor may make small timing adjustments, but any change to facts, quotations, meaning, or story focus must be checked by the reporting team before it appears in the package.