

Listening for Elements (or, the Pieces of a Piece)

Here are some specific elements to listen for while reviewing an audio piece.

- **Narration:** Is the voice clear and compelling? Does it carry you through the piece? Would the piece work better with no narration?
- **Use of sound:** How is sound used to bring you into the story? What effects do you hear? How does it help you “see” what’s happening? Is the sound playing too big a role?
- **Use of music:** If there’s music, does it add to the piece by helping create a mood or in transition? If there isn’t music, would it add to the piece?
- **Technique:** How is the sound quality? Are there any clicks, pops, added breaths or cut words to distract you?
- **Pacing:** How does the piece flow? Does it move along fluidly, or does it stay with certain themes/scenes for too long (or not long enough)?
- **Transitions:** How does the piece move you from one scene to the next? How about from beginning to end? Does the overall structure make sense?
- **Scenes:** Does the producer create a complete scene? Can you see what’s happening? Is there a mood to the scene?
- **Reporting:** Are there facts that are credible? Is it accurate? What questions still need answers?
- **Intro/outro:** How does the producer invite you to listen at the beginning? How does she or he see you off at the end?
- Can you explain what the piece is about in one sentence or less?

Listening for Fusion

As you listen, use these questions to help hear how elements come together.

- Does the piece move you? How?
- Was there enough tension to hold your attention? If no, where can tension be built? If yes, describe.
- Is it honest? Does it feel authentic?
- What was surprising about it?
- How would you describe the tone of this piece? What kind of a mood does it create?
- If your attention wandered, can you remember what was happening in the piece when it lost you? How could it keep holding your attention? Was it too long?
- Does the piece stay with you in a way that's active? Will you still be thinking about it tomorrow?
- Anything else you noticed about how the piece works as whole?