DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
Defense Information School
6500 Mapes Road
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March 12, 2013

MEMORANDUM OF INSTRUCTION

SUBJECT: Defense Information School (DINFOS) Voice Analysis (VA) Grading Criteria and Standards of Submission Process

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide grading criteria and standards for a VA and outline procedures to submit a VA package to DINFOS.

DoD broadcasters must be articulate, effective communicators and sound more professional than the average service member. The audience should always be able to focus on what is being said as opposed to how it is said. A broadcast journalist must deliver copy with authority, using proper voice and diction techniques to help communicate the message, which must be understood the first time it is heard.

Understanding the importance of these criteria, Services often require applicants for the Basic Combat Correspondent (BCC) course to submit a VA package for the DINFOS Broadcast Operations and Maintenance Department (BOMD) to evaluate. The VA helps identify applicants who have the greatest potential to successfully demonstrate the necessary announcing skills in the limited time available at the BCC.

The VA is a systematic screening of an applicant's audio recording of a news script, spot script, five sentences, and extemporaneous segment. These scripts test an applicant's ability to deliver copy, while allowing specially trained DINFOS instructors to evaluate specific voice qualities.

DINFOS BOMD is responsible for receiving, processing, grading, and returning all VA results to respective service VA administrators. BOMD VA team members screen the VA submission, evaluating the recording based on the following VA Categories: Voice Quality, Vocal Energy, Word Grouping, Stress and Intonation, Communication of Ideas, Articulation, and Word Recognition/Comprehension. Based on the overall score of the VA, applicants are placed in one of three categories reflecting the trainability of the individual: "GO," "REQUIRES TRAINING," or "NO GO."

a. An applicant will receive a "GO" for a composite score of 70 percent or higher. A rating of "GO" represents an applicant who is most likely to succeed in BCC.

   (1) A "GO" on a VA does not guarantee successful completion of the announcing skills section of BCC, but it is a strong indicator that an applicant has the ability to successfully complete course announcing skills requirements.

b. An applicant will receive a "REQUIRES TRAINING" for a composite score of 60 to 69 percent. A rating of "REQUIRES TRAINING" identifies an applicant has the potential for improvement with remedial training. DINFOS highly recommends applicants who score "REQUIRES TRAINING" on a VA seek additional voice training prior to submitting another VA package. An applicant with a "REQUIRES TRAINING" may submit another VA package for screening after completing remedial training. This should happen no earlier than 30 days from the previous submission date. Applicants may submit up to four VA packages in one year.

(1) Applicants seeking additional voice training should contact their local unit public affairs office to request training from a trained military public affairs broadcaster. They may also seek remedial training for announcing broadcast news and spot information pieces from a local university or college, the Internet, or local television and radio stations.

c. An applicant will receive a "NO GO" for a composite score of 59 percent or lower, or for having a "NO GO" in any specific category. A rating of "NO GO" indicates the applicant's issues are too severe or pronounced to be corrected during the announcing skills section of the BCC. Applicants who score a "NO GO" are encouraged to explore another career field. An applicant with a "NO GO" may submit another package no earlier than 30 days from his/her last submission date. However, DINFOS strongly recommends additional voice training prior to submitting another VA package.

The final score of the VA is based on an overall assessment by the BOMD VA team. Each VA submission begins with an overall score of 14 points in each of six VA categories and 16 points in one category for a composite score of 100 percent. The point value is assigned based upon the complexity of the specific area to improve. Points will be deducted during the analysis based on the applicant's performance in the following VA categories:

a. **Voice Quality**. This category describes the characteristics of a broadcast journalist's voice, such as resonance, pitch, nasality or denasality, raspy, breathy, harsh, or strident.

(1) Evaluators factor the combination of these characteristics to grade Voice Quality:

(a) Resonance - the fullness of the voice used to enrich and enhance the broadcast.

(b) Pitch - the highs and lows of the voice.

(c) Glottal fry, also known as vocal fry - the pitch of the voice drops unnaturally at the end of a phrase or sentence.

(d) Harsh or strident voice - a rough, scratchy, gravelly or gruff and excessively low-pitched voice.

(e) Breathy - fuzzy, whispery or delicate voice, conveying immaturity and lack of credibility.

(f) Throaty or muffled - raspy.

(2) The points awarded the applicant based upon performance in the Voice Quality category are as follows:

(a) An award of 16 points indicates no problems in this area. Voice enhances information being communicated.

(b) An award of 12-14 points indicates minor problems. Performance is not perfect, but is good. Voice is pleasant and does not distract from the information.

(c) An award of 8-10 points indicates performance is average. The speaker's voice has flaws, but none so pronounced that the listener immediately notices deficiencies. The applicant is able to effectively communicate information.

(d) An award of 6 points indicates performance is not considered trainable at that time. The speaker's voice is flawed to the point where the listener immediately focuses on the flaw (nasality, stridency, denasality) and not the information.

(e) An award of 0-4 points indicates an un-trainable delivery. The speaker's voice is flawed beyond the scope of BCC. Applicant may need to work with a professional speech therapist to correct deficiencies.

b. **Vocal Energy**. This category describes the applicant's ability to use vitality, volume, and projection. Vocal Energy is the dimensions of strength found in a candidate's speaking, the ability to place emphasis on ideas, concepts or feelings.

(1) Evaluators factor the combination of these characteristics to grade Vocal Energy:

(a) Vitality - the ability to deliver copy with confidence, enthusiasm, warmth, and rapport.

(b) Volume - the intensity or power of sound. A delivery that is too loud or too soft hampers the communication process by interfering with the audience's ability to receive and understand the message, affecting credibility.

(c) Projection - the ability to deliver copy with a controlled energy, creating impact and intelligibility.

(2) The points awarded the applicant based upon performance in the Vocal Energy category are as follows:

(a) An award of 14 points indicates applicant is enthusiastic, confident, and credible.

(b) An award of 10-12 points indicates applicant has some minor problems. Delivery is not perfect, but generally appropriate.

(c) An award of 8 points indicates applicant's performance is average. Applicant delivers the copy as it is written without vitality or color.

(d) An award of 4-6 points indicates applicant's performance is not considered trainable at that time. Delivery is very dull and difficult to understand.

(e) An award of 0-2 points indicates the applicant is un-trainable.

c. **Word Grouping.** This category is an evaluation of how an applicant communicates complete thoughts at the proper pace with breath support.

(1) Evaluators factor the combination of these characteristics to grade Word Grouping:

(a) Phrasing - the ability to keep the same ideas together, expressing complete thoughts and avoiding choppiness.

(b) Pacing/Rate - the ability to use the appropriate rate so the listener can easily and clearly understand the message after hearing it once.

(c) Breathing - the efficient use and control of breathing to maintain energy. Effective breath support is achieved by using diaphragmatic breathing, not using "clavicular" or shallow breathing.

(2) The points awarded the applicant based upon performance in the Word Grouping category are as follows:

(a) An award of 14 points indicates no problems in this area. Applicant consistently communicates clearly and effectively.

(b) An award of 10-12 points indicates some minor problems. Applicant occasionally makes a mistake.

(c) An award of 8 points indicates the applicant needs improvement. He/she may be halting, faltering, choppy, hesitant, or slightly fast/slow in places, but has the general idea.

(d) An award of 4-6 points indicates performance is off pace, too fast or slow, choppy, halting, or faltering to be clearly understood or credible.

(e) An award of 0-2 points indicates delivery is not considered trainable at that time. Delivery is annoying, confusing, and difficult to take seriously. Applicant sounds like he/she does not know what he/she is talking about or has difficulty reading.

d. **Stress and Intonation.** This category evaluates inflections that emphasize the proper words to convey ideas. Broadcast journalists must avoid sounding artificial or like they are "punching" (over emphasizing) words.

(1) Evaluators factor the combination of these characteristics to grade Stress and Intonation:

(a) Inflection - the ability to emphasize words to convey ideas by avoiding sounding artificial, predictable, or using patterned or a "sing-song" delivery.

(b) Punching - excessive volume or force to emphasize syllables or words.

(c) Artificial - an unnatural, forced, exaggerated, or fake sounding delivery.

(2) The points awarded the applicant based upon performance in the Stress and Intonation category are as follows:

(a) An award of 14 points indicates no problems. Applicant consistently emphasizes the right words, expresses ideas clearly, effectively, and conversationally.

(b) An award of 10-12 points indicates applicant has minor problems announcing copy, occasionally making a mistake.

(c) An award of 8 points indicates applicant needs improvement. Delivery is somewhat patterned, artificial, or predictable at times.

(d) An award of 4-6 points indicates applicant has specific problems in one of the following areas: emphasizing the wrong words; unnatural or forced delivery; or applicant sounds uncomfortable or unsure of him/herself or with his/her copy.

(e) An award of 0-2 points indicates applicant has major problems in the areas listed above, and delivery is not considered trainable at that time.

Applicant has no credibility, and delivery is choppy, patterned, and difficult to understand.

e. **Communication of Ideas.** This category is the ability to clearly interpret a message, communicate the story, and use transitions.

(1) Evaluators factor the combination of these characteristics to grade Communication of Ideas:

(a) Interpretation - the ability to understand and communicate copy, conveying the appropriate mood and meaning of the copy and involving the listener in the story.

(b) Transition - the ability to move effectively and smoothly between phrases, sentences, and stories.

(c) Authority - delivering the message with confidence.

(d) Reading words - sounding disconnected to the story or audience.

(2) The points awarded the applicant based upon performance in the Communication of Ideas category are as follows:

(a) An award of 14 points indicates no problems in this area. Applicant consistently communicates ideas clearly, correctly, and conversationally.

(b) An award of 10-12 points indicates delivery has some minor problems. Applicant occasionally makes a mistake.

(c) An award of 8 points indicates needs improvement. Applicant has the general idea, but sometimes has trouble with authority, or sounds hesitant or faltering at times, and/or the applicant sounds like he/she is reading words off a piece of paper.

(d) An award of 4-6 points indicates delivery is not trainable at that time. Applicant's delivery presents major problems. Delivery lacks authority and credibility. Delivery contains an audible and very noticeable tremor or question in voice. Applicant may be nervous or lack expression, sounding bored or as if he/she is performing.

(e) An award of 0-2 points indicates a complete loss of applicant's composure during delivery, or excessive nervousness resulting in no communication.

f. **Articulation.** This category evaluates how well the applicant communicates clean, clear, and resonant copy. Applicant's delivery includes sharp, clear sounds with distinct, audible pronunciation of vowels and consonants. Speech is natural and smooth flowing, correctly sounding all syllables within a word.

(1) Evaluators factor the combination of these characteristics to grade Articulation:

(a) Omission - dropping initial, middle, or ending sounds.

(b) Substitution/Addition - adding or changing sounds, for example saying /d/ or /f/ for /th/: "dat" for "that," "bof" for "both;" or saying /ah/ for /i/: "fahve" for "five."

(c) Distortion - slurring sounds or running words together, pronouncing words indistinctly as in hurried or careless speech.

(d) Over-articulation - unnatural, robotic, or mechanical delivery.

(2) The points awarded the applicant based upon performance in the Articulation category are as follows:

(a) An award of 14 points indicates no problems in this area. Applicant consistently articulates words clearly and correctly.

(b) An award of 10-12 points indicates delivery has minor problems. Applicant occasionally makes a mistake.

(c) An award of 8 points indicates delivery needs improvement. Problems do not greatly affect the communication process or eliminate credibility.

(d) An award of 4-6 points indicates delivery is not considered trainable at that time. Delivery has major, glaring problems that appear constantly and are immediately noticeable, detracting from the announcer's credibility. Applicant may be over-articulating copy, dropping sounds from words, or changing sounds of words to the point where the audience can concentrate on nothing else.

(e) An award of 0-2 points indicates applicant's delivery is flawed beyond the scope of BCC. Applicant may need to work with a professional speech therapist to correct the problem.

g. **Word Recognition/Comprehension.** This category evaluates an applicant's ability to read, understand, and communicate broadcast script or copy, avoiding multiple stumbles or script errors.

(1) Evaluators factor the combination of these characteristics to grade Word Recognition/Comprehension:

(a) Stumbles/Snags - hesitant or uncertain, trips over words, or gets lost in the copy.

(b) Mispronunciation - mispronouncing a proper name, place, or thing, such as rank.

(c) Script and Copy Errors - adding, deleting, or changing words in the script.

(2) The points awarded, based upon performance in the Word Recognition/Comprehension category, are as follows:

(a) An award of 14 points indicates no problems in this area. Applicant communicates well.

(b) An award of 10-12 points indicates minor problems announcing copy, occasionally making a mistake.

(c) An award of 8 points indicates needs improvement. Delivery has five or more stumbles, copy errors, or mispronunciations in one delivery.

(d) An award of 4-6 points indicates delivery is not considered trainable at that time. The number of mistakes significantly affects credibility and ability to communicate. Delivery may also contain a major error in fact like mispronouncing a proper name, place, or misstating a rank.

(e) An award of 0-2 points indicates applicant may have difficulty reading.

DINFOS BOMD VA team members evaluate applicants' voices as they hear them. VA Evaluations are conducted on a first-come, first-evaluated basis. Applicants are allowed only one "take" per submission, i.e. an applicant cannot be recorded multiple times for the same submission. The DINFOS standard is to have submissions evaluated and results returned via e-mail within four duty days from the day of receipt, and a copy furnished to the service proponent, if desired. For more information on preparing and submitting a VA package, see Letter of Instruction for Preparing DINFOS Voice Analysis Screening Packages at the BOMD section of the DINFOS web site at www.dinfos.dma.mil.

Administrators should not submit a VA package to DINFOS for screening if the applicant has any physical condition, deformity, or illness that affects voice quality at the time of the recording. Administrators will not use voice enhancements, such as equalizers, reverb, or production music, nor should they send multiple takes. Since the VA is an official academic prerequisite and cannot be self-administered, recruiters and career counselors must contact the BOMD Academic Director by email at BOMD-VA@dinfos.dma.mil, or by phone at (301) 677-3188, DSN 622-3188, for the DINFOS Voice Analysis script.

All requests for exceptions to policy for the VA evaluation will be sent to the respective service proponent point of contact for coordination.

Jeremy M. Martin
Colonel, U.S. Army
Commandant

VOICE AUDITION EVALUATION

Revised – March 2001

Auditionee_____ **Evaluator**_____

Service:_____ **Rank**_____ **Date**_____

U=Untrainable

Voice Quality

a) Resonance b) Pitch c) Glottal Fry — U 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16

d) Harsh/Strident e) Breathy

Vocal Energy

a) Vitality b) Volume c) Projection — U 2 4 6 8 10 12 14

Word grouping

a) Phrasing b) Pacing/Rate c) Breathing — U 2 4 6 8 10 12 14

Stress & Intonation

a) Inflections b) Punching c) Artificial — U 2 4 6 8 10 12 14

Communication of Ideas

a) Interpretation b) Transitions — U 2 4 6 8 10 12 14

c) Lacks Authority d) Reading Words

Articulation

a) Omissions b) Subs/Additions — U 2 4 6 8 10 12 14

c) Distortions d) Over Articulating

Word Recognition/Comprehension

a) Stumbles/Snags b) Mispro — U 2 4 6 8 10 12 14

c) Script/Copy Errors

TOTAL POINTS_____ **PASS/FAIL**

Note: The final score of this grade sheet reflects the trainability of the individual. It does not guarantee his or her success in Broadcast Announcing Skills.