Image Structuring: Make Your Text Come Alive

Words Have Meaning

If you don't know what you're saying, the audience won't either - you will merely be reciting sounds instead of conveying an image. Look up any words you don't know. The meanings of words change over time, so when working with older texts look up everything.

Operative Words

What are the most important words in the line? If you had to convey the idea being expressed in the line using only a handful of words, what words would you use? Who or what is the object of the sentence? Who or what is the subject of the sentence? Look for nouns, proper nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Sentence diagramming is helpful practice for this.

ROMEO But **soft!** What **light** through yonder **window breaks**?

It is the **east**, and **Juliet** is the **sun**!

- Romeo and Juliet, Act II Scene 2

Antithesis

Are there any contrasting ideas? Look for antonyms; who or what is being compared to who or what?

THESEUS Merry and tragical! tedious and brief!

That is, **hot ice** and **wondrous strange snow**. How shall we find the **concord** of this **discord**?

- Midsummer Night's Dream, Act V Scene 1

Parentheticals

Is the character interrupting herself to give us more information? Parentheticals in the example below have been italicized.

HERMIONE To me can life be no commodity:

The crown and comfort of my life, *your favour*, I do give lost; *for I do feel it gone*, But know not how it went. My second joy And first-fruits of my body, from his presence I am barr'd, like one infectious. My third comfort Starr'd most unluckily, is from my breast,

The innocent milk in its most innocent mouth,

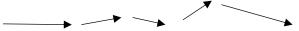
Haled out to murder

- Winter's Tale, Act III Scene 2

Grace Keller Scotch, 2021

Lists

Each item in a list should be a separate image from the other items. You can achieve this by altering the pitch of your voice.



We bought apples, grapes, pears, and oranges.

Avoid Emphasizing These**

- Articles a, an, the
- Conjunctions and, but, or
- Negative words no, not
- Verbs of being am, is, was, shall
- Pronouns he, her, it, they

** There are always exceptions – if a pronoun is representing the subject or object of a sentence, for example, or if a negative word is a part of antithesis, etc. Sometimes a really specific area of voiceover has certain conventions that are different from other forms of acting, such as emphasizing conjunctions for commercial reads.

Images and Breath

Always be careful to sustain energy so that you can finish strong and avoid trailing off at the end of a sentence. Once you identify the images in your text, you can identify and mark places to take a breath in between those images. Never interrupt an image with a breath – it will be disruptive and make the image unclear.

Other Quirks

Adjectives and adverbs should be treated as part of the word they are modifying and incorporated into that image.

When words are repeated in a section of the text for contrast, the repeated word becomes less important to the image than the new image/word it is being contrasted with.



Roger's favorite color was **red**. Normally he wore red *shoes*, a red *shirt*, and a red *jacket*. **Today**, though, his shirt was **blue**.

Helpful Texts

- Rex Barks by Phyllis Davenport and Lisa Vandamme, ISBN 9781889439358
- > Speaking Shakespeare by Patsy Rodenburg, ISBN 9781403965400