



Creating a Commercial

Commercials are designed to accomplish two things:

1. Communicate knowledge about a product -- could be a car, shampoo, a law firm, or a person, like a political candidate – or a behavior, such as not smoking, identifying a designated driver or healthy eating; and
2. Persuade or induce the viewer to like, want, need or support that product or behavior.

When designing a commercial, you are generally focused on three elements:

1. The knowledge or information that you want to communicate.
2. The outcome that you want from the viewer
3. The creative approach that will seek to deliver 1) the information, in a way that will produce 2) the desired outcome from the viewer.

Below are a few tips for how to create a good commercial.

TIP 1: WHAT ARE YOU HOPING TO ACCOMPLISH?

Begin with a statement of purpose: what are you trying to get the audience to understand and to do, ...or think...or behave. Once you have written your statement of purpose, all the other decisions should, in some way, support that statement.

I need to create a commercial for Edgar Allan Poe's short story, "The Fall of the House of Usher." The purpose of the commercial is to both share the overall theme of the story, but also to persuade people to read Poe's work.

TIP 2: WHAT'S YOUR PRIMARY NARRATIVE TOOL?

Like all narratives, commercials have many tools at their disposal for delivering their message. Tools include the use of:

- Humor
- Mystery
- Beauty
- Celebrities
- Fear and guilt
- Music
- Surprise
- Forcefulness

But unlike most narrative forms, the commercial is only sixty seconds (or less) long and can generally only afford to employ one narrative tool. Pick your approach and then stay with it.

The list above is not exhaustive. Brainstorm with your team about other narrative tools.

The primary narrative tool that I will use is suspense and mystery. The best way to communicate my content and to engage the viewer is to use the tools that Poe uses himself. By the end of the commercial I want my audience to be a little scared, but desperate to learn more; to find out what happens next.

TIP 3: BRAINSTORM, WRITE AND CHOOSE YOUR IMAGERY, CREATE A TAGLINE.

The next steps involve brainstorming your approach, scripting the commercial and choosing the visual shots to support the message and the script.

It is often helpful to look at existing commercials on TV and to analyze them. Which ones work and why? Which ones grab your attention and why? Which ones offend you...and why?

You may notice that many commercials have a tagline – a final motto or phrase that they hope the audience will remember; or that is designed to punch up your message in a dramatic way. Consider creating your own tagline.

TIP 4: CREATE A SCRIPT BREAKDOWN TO ORGANIZE YOUR INFORMATION.

Below is a script breakdown template that can help you to organize your information. Each shot of your commercial needs to have its own row of information.

<p>AUDIO Similar to a storyboard, include images that show what is going on at that specific point in the audio discourse.</p>	<p>VISUAL In this section, write what is being said and by whom. Do we see the people talking? Is it an announcer? Make sure you specify what is going on enough that anyone re-reading your script could potentially recreate the commercial</p>	<p>CAST Jane Doe John Doe</p>	<p>PROPS Candle Stick Bed sheet Hat</p>	<p>LOCATION Hallway near the look lik hope to audienc of Ushe</p>
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