



RADIO PROGRAM WRITER'S GUIDELINES

Background

StarDate is a daily two-minute radio program that currently airs on more than 300 stations in the United States. It is produced by McDonald Observatory at The University of Texas at Austin.

Universo is the Spanish-language version of our program, which debuted in April 1995. The content for most Universo programs matches that of the StarDate programs, but new scripts sometimes are produced specifically for Universo.

German public radio also translates the scripts and airs them as Sternzeit.

Subject Matter

StarDate and Universo cover a wide range of topics related to the science of astronomy, space exploration, skylore, and skywatching. Programs offer tips on what to look for and how to look for it, recent astronomical discoveries, primers on basic astronomy and astrophysics, the history of astronomy and space exploration, the technology of astronomy and space exploration, and plans for the future. Topics are not limited to hard-core science items. Scripts can cover the arts, business, or other areas, as long as there is a solid connection to the sky.

When considering script topics, look for items that haven't made national news yet. Research findings don't have to make the front page of every newspaper in the country to be interesting. Also, if you'd like to write historical pieces, look for off-beat items and events; we've already covered Copernicus, Kepler, Tycho, Newton, and the like pretty well.

Script topics should appeal to a wide audience, not just professional or amateur astronomers.

Basic Guidelines

Writers must generate their own topics. Please jot down a sentence or two about each proposed topic and submit them to the producer for consideration.

Sentences should be short and lively. Keep the jargon to a minimum, and explain technical concepts in non-technical terms. Use as few adjectives as possible. Vivid, technically accurate metaphors are always welcome. Always use the active voice, not passive.

Don't introduce too many concepts in one script -- one or two main ideas will be enough. If you can't squeeze it all into one script, we can discuss the possibility of a two-part series.

Scripts MUST be no longer than 275 words, and 250 is even better. The limit is absolute.

Please include a list of sources and references used in preparing each script.

Don't worry about the opening teaser or the program close; those will be added later.

Writers receive a byline on the printed scripts.

StarDate does not use pseudonyms for any writers.

Rights

StarDate buys the one-time rights to use the scripts in our English, Spanish, and German programs, and on our World Wide Web sites.

Payment

Payment is modest, with the exact amount depending on the topic, writer, and other factors determined by the producer. Payments are processed within two weeks of script acceptance, with checks following about four weeks later. Because we are part of a state agency, writers will receive a couple of forms to fill out and sign.

Queries

Submit queries to Producer Damond Benningfield.

StarDate
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