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Jan18

[Mike](#)

[Podcast length \(part 2\): Why 'anything goes' is lazy](#)

[Last time](#), I shared a couple reasons why some podcasts, such as [Studio 86](#), are exactly timed (15:00, for example, rather than 15:17). But, I hinted, the most important reason for timing precision is that an undisciplined "anything goes" mentality would be *lazy* and inconsiderate. Let me explain. . . .

Just as "word counts"—limits on the number of words in articles—can improve writing, podcast time limits make for *much better* podcasts. Good writers know *exactly* what I mean: You finish a story only to realize you're 75 words over your targeted word count. So, you edit. Almost *invariably*, pruning the "dead wood" improves your writing. (Trust me, there's *always* dead wood that you hadn't previously noticed.)

The reverse is also true: lack of word limits (or call it lack of discipline—which, regrettably, is the plague of some online prose) frequently results in poor writing. (Readers already know [my feelings on this topic](#).) Some might argue that freedom from such constraints is a beauty of Web publishing. I disagree. Word counts, like deadlines, are our *friends*. Plus, editing can be gratifying. That's right, *gratifying*. Here's one of my many favorite maxims about writing: "Anyone can write. Only the real writer knows how to erase." (Read more favorite quotes—about writing, reporting and life—in [my Facebook profile](#).)

Getting back to podcasts, my targeted pre-edited length for [Studio 86](#) is about 16 minutes—leaving me with more *good* content to work with once I begin editing and permitting me to freely cut some *ums, ahs* and long pauses. Alternatively, I could end the show at the 14:39 mark—allowing 21 seconds for the show's open and close—and leave in all the *ums, ahs* and long pauses. But that would result in 14:39 of less-than-compelling content. Or, I could stop recording at, say, 16:33, and be done with it. But that would be *lazy* of me and inconsiderate of you, the listener.

I'll concede that 15 minutes is an arbitrary podcast length (although there's a [general consensus](#) that they should run no longer than 15 to 20 minutes). But, to those who might argue that their podcast is compelling and concise, no matter its length, let me ask this: No matter how great you might think your 90-minute podcast (or your 2,500-word article) is, how "great" is it if few people make it all the way to the end?

That said, over-editing can detract from a podcast's conversational tone. It's a delicate balance. But because you're using precious time to listen—whether it's 60 seconds for [RIT NEWSMINUTE](#) or 15 minutes for [Studio 86](#)—the least I can do is try to make each minute worth it. Anything else would be . . . *lazy*.

Have a great weekend!

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