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How to Estimate a Video Script Length for Audio Voiceover

Are you working on a project that will include audio voiceover?

Here's how to estimate how long the voiceover will be, based on the number of words in your script:

Choose a text you've written that's similar in nature to what you'll be recording

Set a time for one minute

Read the text aloud, at a comfortable pace, until the timer goes off

Select the last word you read all the way back up to the first word

Determine the word count for the selection (using the word count available in most word processors)

Now you know your average WPM = words per minute.

If your project has time limits, you can use your WPM to estimate target script length:

WPM x minimum minutes = minimum word count for your script

WPM x maximum minutes = maximum word count for your script

For example:

- project has a maximum of 5 minutes
- you speak at 120 wpm
- your script should be under 600 words

Average Words Per Page

To estimate page count, figure out how many words per page you tend to write, using your draft or another document similar to the one you'll be recording.

As a general example, a document with:

single-spaced lines

1" margins

Cambria 12pt font

Typically has between 500-700 words per page, depending on paragraph length and use of dialogue.

Averages Speaking Rates

Here are some averages speaking rates by professionals, to help you put your WPM into context:

Lectures and presentations: 100-120 wpm

Audio books: 150-160 wpm

Talk radio and podcasts: 160 wpm

Auctioneers (almost too fast to hear): 250 wpm

Given that your audio voiceover is likely to accompany visuals the viewer also has to pay attention; your WPM should probably be in the range of lectures and presentations or lower.



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Average Conversation & Reading Rates

More average rates to put your WPM into context:

Casual, in-person conversation: 120-180 wpm

Reading speed for non-specialized material: 250-350 wpm

How long does it take to read 800 words out loud?

Reading Time by Word Counts

Word Count	Slow (125 wpm)	Average (300 wpm)
600 words	5 minutes	2.0 minutes
750 words	6 minutes	2.5 minutes
800 words	6 minutes	2.7 minutes