

Presenting Tips for Video Recordings

November 1, 2002

Tips for Presenting In Front of a Camera

Steady Eye Contact

- Learn to maintain eye contact with your interviewer. Think of him or her as your captive audience, and focus your eye contact on them. It is fine to look away briefly following a response or while a question is asked. Practice holding eye contact for 3- and 5-second intervals.
- Maintain steady eye contact with the interviewer when being taped (and audience members during live presentations); this will enhance your rapport and credibility.
 - The interviewer will frame the shot of you with your head and upper chest showing, and off-center to one side or the other. The interviewer should sit or stand next to the camera and you, the interviewee, should face them. Do not look at the camera, just carry on a normal conversation, smile and keep eye contact with the interviewer. This may seem awkward, but it is how most professional interviews are done (*see figure 4*) and it works very well.



Figure 4. With interviews, place the subject's head at the back of the shot, and have them look at you, standing away from the camera

Posture

- When sitting, be conscious of your posture and sit up straight. This posture gives the appearance of being in control, relaxed and confident.
- When standing, stand with your feet about shoulder-width apart, with knees slightly bent when you are not moving about the room

Movement

- Keep your movements limited. Hand gestures will be magnified on the screen; therefore, gesture naturally, not mechanically.
- While arms waving about can be distracting, you do not want to look stiff either. Use small, smooth movements when gesturing.
 - Focus on your purpose and presentation. You want the attention and concentration to be on you and what you are saying.

- Do not use your hands excessively, unless it fits your personality

Facial Expressions

- Use facial expressions to show concern, enthusiasm, empathy and understanding
- Appropriate expressions will make you more believable to participants
- Be genuine! Check yourself in the mirror before experimenting with facial expressions.
- Smile, as much as possible, naturally

Responses

- Keep answers short and think about what you want to say before you say it. A typical sound bite is 10 to 15 seconds. Pauses can be edited out.
- If you feel you did not make your point clearly, ask the interviewer to rerecord your response
- Speak clearly and watch your pace; avoid speaking too quickly

Wardrobe

- Dress conservatively in solid colors. Dress warmly as well, as TV studios are air-conditioned and usually cool or cold. Keep distractions, like certain accessories, to a minimum. Choose soft, neutral shades rather than black and white, or even red and green, which are too extreme on camera. Various shades of blue work well. (Watch TV presenters and newscasters for other ideas about camera-friendly clothes.)
 - Combine dark suits (navy blue/charcoal) with pastel shirts or blouses (cream, light blue, pink, peach or lavender)
 - Avoid tweed, herringbone, small checks, stripes, and other small patterns, unless they are very subtle
 - Ties in muted tones and subtle patterns work well, although solids work best
 - Avoid clothing made from a glittery fabric or with jewels attached
 - Keep jewelry to a minimum and especially avoid big, bright pieces. Large, heavy necklaces may hit the microphone and chunky or charm bracelets can hit a table or chair arm and cause extraneous noise.
 - Glasses are OK (especially if you need them)!

Microphone

- A microphone can be attached easily to a tie. Scarves and buttons can rub on the microphone and cause distracting noise.
- Jackets with lapels, shirts with collars, button down blouses, and cardigan sweaters work best for the small lapel-style microphones; they do not attach well to pullover shirts or sweaters

Making Better Videos/Recordings

- **Get a Good Tripod, and Use It** - Be sure to get a tripod with a head specifically designed for video
- **Learn When to Pan, Zoom and Use Other Moves** - Take a shot of something and leave it there for 10-20 seconds, stop the recording and take another shot. When panning and zooming, use slow, smooth, and deliberate motions.
- **Do a Little Shot Composition** - Before you hit the red button, look at your shot and see if you have everything in it that you want and that it is framed nicely. Good shot composition uses the “Rule of Thirds,” where you treat the screen as being divided into a tic-tac-toe pattern. When framing a person, you want their eyes on the top line and the center of their head on the left or the right line (e.g., facing inward).
- **Learn Your Camcorder Like the Back of Your Hand** - Having good knowledge of your camcorder's features and functions is a necessary element of making better videos
- **Invest in a Lavalier Microphone** – One of the best audio purchases you can make is a lavalier (lav) microphone. It is designed to clip onto the clothing of the subject (e.g., lapel, tie, or collar), near their mouth, and plug into the camcorder to pick up the best possible speech audio. Lavs are also small enough that you can hide one somewhere in a scene to pick up better sound than a camera-mounted microphone.
 - If you really don't think you would put a lav to any use, then consider some other external mic, such as a shotgun or handheld
 - The reason for doing this is simple; your on-camera microphone cannot be placed closer to the audio source than the camera
 - Even the best on-camera microphones will not adequately pick up soft sounds at a distance
 - Additionally, the unwanted sounds between you and your subject will be picked up, and with many on-camera microphones, this can include sounds to the side and behind the camera as well
 - External microphones start at around \$30
- **Look Into Lighting** - A lot of image quality problems can be solved by employing some simple lighting techniques. Whenever possible, shoot in a well-lit area. Make sure there is no bright light, such as the sun, behind a subject.

Sources:

Charnley & Røstvold

www.monster.com

www.camcorderinfo.com