



This guide has been produced to help you prepare for a television interview

You have been asked to take part in a live or pre-recorded television programme and if this is your first time in front of a television camera and you are unfamiliar with the workings of a TV studio this guide has been produced to give you a few useful tips and pointers to make your first appearance on TV enjoyable and comfortable. Everyone involved in the production is a part of a team that has only one aim - to make your contribution to the programme as successful as possible.

WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?

Avoid wearing white, a pale coloured shirt or top is better for the camera than absolute white. In the same way as a stills camera finds it difficult to expose someone's face who is standing in front of a bright window, it is hard for the television camera to be exposed correctly for the face and for the 'whiteness' of the shirt.

Black clothing is best avoided where possible as the camera has great difficulty in resolving information in large areas of black. Fine stripes, checks or herring-bone patterned clothing should also be avoided - the effect when seen through a camera is that of 'strobing' or 'flashing' - this can be very visually disturbing. It is always wise to take along an alternative shirt, top or jacket if you are unsure. T-shirts with obvious advertising logos or overt statements should not be worn. You may be asked to avoid wearing blue, (or in certain cases, green) because an effect is sometimes used called chromakey or CSO (colour separation overlay). This is an effect where, when a person stands in front of a completely blue screen, it is possible to superimpose another picture (possibly a graph or diagram) behind the person standing in the studio. This technique makes it possible to superimpose a picture of the Eiffel Tower behind someone actually standing in front of a blue screen in a studio in London! If the person was to wear a blue tie or shirt, then the picture would also 'bleed' through the tie or shirt making that part of the person seem invisible.

IN THE STUDIO

It can get quite warm under studio lighting, so do not wear too many layers of clothing. If you are to sit on a swivel chair, resist the temptation to swing to and fro - this can happen as a result of nerves, but is very distracting to the viewer as is toying with a pen or with papers on your lap. Distractions will be happening all around you with technicians moving equipment and guests being brought into the studio, you must ignore all this and always maintain eye contact with the show's presenter even if you are not being interviewed at that point. You never know when the Director will cut to a shot of you.

Never leave the studio floor without checking first with the Floor Manager or Director.

If you are involved in a live question and answer session, where questions are coming from somewhere outside the studio you are in, it should be agreed between the Director and yourself before the programme whether you are to direct your answers to the presenter in the studio or directly to the caller down the lens of the camera. Unless you are very experienced in delivering your presentation direct to the camera it can be very daunting. It is far easier to maintain eye contact and to follow your train of thought with someone sitting with you in the studio. Establish with the Director what is expected of you before the programme starts. If you are to talk direct to the camera, ask which camera you should be looking at.

Even when the programme is not specifically involving you but you are still on set, please do not look around - you may still appear in some of the side shots from another camera, and therefore should be seen to be paying attention at all times.

If you lose your train of thought during your interview the presenter will help get you back on the right track; that is what he is there for. If he/she doesn't feel you have explained a point in the way that is clear then he/she may ask a supplementary question to cover what you have missed out.



USING TELEPROMPT?

This is a device by which the words you wish to say appear on a screen directly in front of the camera, so that you appear to have learnt your presentation by heart.

Remember that the operator of this machine will keep up with your speed. If the words seem to be going too fast, you slow down and the operator will slow down too. If you try to keep up with the prompter; the operator will think you want to go faster, and speed up too, with catastrophic results! Remember you're the boss - go at your own pace!

GOING LIVE!

If the programme is broadcast 'live' or being recorded as live then the overall timing of the programme is critical. Timings must adhere to the pre-arranged schedule. If one person takes longer than agreed early on in the programme, then another person will have much less time for their presentation later in the programme. The programme still has to end exactly at the specified time. If the presenter asks you to comment 'briefly' then please do; but keep your comments short and to the point or you are likely to be cut off in mid sentence.

There will be an Production Assistant director (PA) keeping a stopwatch on each section of the programme, and counting the presenter and the contributors through their allocated time sections. The presenter often wears an ear piece through which he/she can hear the director and the PA so that he/she can hurry the proceedings along if they are over-running. The Floor Manager (FM), who is responsible for safety on the studio floor and for making sure that everyone is in the right place at the right time, also receives information from the Director through his/her ear piece, and may give a pre-arranged signal to help let a contributor know how long is left for his/her presentation.

USING VT?

If your presentation includes using video clips (VT) over which you are going to talk then they can be dealt with in the same way as graphics (see next section). If the video has, for example, an interview of someone else - over which you are not going to talk, (i.e., the clip has it's own soundtrack), then the Director needs to ensure that you have finished speaking before the clip appears. Some video machines need time to run up to speed, so the Director will need to know approximately the last 15 words you are going to say, so that the clip can be shown in the right place.

e.g. "...the pioneer of this technique is Professor John Higgins, and I spoke to him last week at the Charing Cross Hospital in Hammersmith." (cut to taped interview).

Your last words are important - do not add or delete anything at this point.

When you have agreed with the Director where you need to see your graphics or video during your presentation, trust him or her to put them in the right place - do not look around to see whether they have appeared yet. Ask for a monitor in the studio if you need to read details from a graphic, or have them listed on a small card by your side for reference. It is possible to have reminders of points you wish to cover put onto the teleprompt. As you cover one point, the teleprompt operator will move on down the list.



USING VISUALS?

If your presentation involves visuals or graphics or if there is to be videotape which has to appear at a specific point in the programme, then you need to agree with the Director in advance exactly where they are to be inserted, and insure that you receive an adequate rehearsal.

Often the subject matter of the presentation will not be familiar to the Director, and unless the entire presentation is scripted and on teleprompt you must agree keywords with the Director that lets him/her know that now is when you need to see the graphics. It could merely be the words used as a written heading on the graphic itself, or the phrase,

“...and as you can see from this chart...” or “...as this video clip shows...”.

This will then instruct the necessary person to roll the VT or to cut to the graphic.

On some occasions you will be given a button to press to enable you to cue the change of graphic - you must not press this button until you intend talking about the specific graphic otherwise it will appear on the screen too early.

If a graphic outlines several points as a list and you wish to refer to them one at a time, then the Director may reveal one point of the graphic, then return to a shot of your face while you go into further detail, and then return to the graphic as you begin to talk about the second point and so on. So don't panic if you see the graphic disappear from the screen before you have reached your second point. If you have been talking about point one in detail, then it is far more interesting to see your face on the screen, than five minutes of one line of writing on the graphic.

It is very important that each contributor to the programme ensures that they are happy with their graphics before they get to the studio. Graphics can not be changed, or others inserted, prior to the programme being aired. Scripts and outline graphics should be agreed several weeks before the studio day, so that they can be made up correctly. Minor script alterations are possible on the studio day, but only during the rehearsal.

As a general rule you should not include any information on a graphic which you do not intend covering in your presentation - no matter how interesting the facts may be. Try to keep the information to the absolute minimum - this will make your graphics more memorable. The usable area of a TV screen for graphics is much smaller than that of a 35mm slide and generally the more information to be included, the smaller the text has to be and hence the harder it is to read on the screen. Please remember that each graphic will not be displayed on the screen for as long as say a slide at a conference, therefore the viewer has less time to read it.

Please note that you will be unable to point to anything on your visuals; so if a particular area requires highlighting then you should indicate this to the Director when you brief them with details of the visuals you wish to use.

It may be that the Director will split up some of your visuals so instead of only one frame this becomes a build up of maybe three or four frames. This is to make the visuals easier to read on the TV screen.

A script or outline of your presentation indicating where you intend using your visuals is an invaluable aid for the Director and the graphics operator. You should attempt to provide some form of script where possible. Even a tape recorded presentation which can be transcribed is preferable to having no script at all.



ON THE STUDIO DAY

You will be asked to arrive at the studio a few hours in advance of the programme, this is quite often to allow time for your visit to the make-up department. For men, this often means a little powder so that you don't shine under the studio lights! This even more important if the programme is in High Definition (HD) as every bead of sweat or skin blemish can be seen in frightening detail.

This time will also allow for rehearsals and for the studio Director to meet with you and explain what will happen. Use this opportunity to rehearse yourself and to familiarise yourself with the studio and its surroundings and the operation of any equipment you will be using or demonstrating during your presentation.

Avoid the temptation to have an alcoholic drink to steady the nerves before you go on air. Do try to relax and develop a rapport with the presenter and the other studio guests. This will lend an air of confidence and informality to your presentation.

REMEMBER - Everyone present in the studio has the same aim - to make your performance, and your contribution towards the final programme a success. Please do not be afraid to ask questions or comment if you are unhappy about anything.

WHAT IF THE PROGRAMME IS PRE-RECORDED?

Most of what has already been said still applies.

However, the interview may well run longer than the allotted time as it will be edited at a later date. Graphics or VT will be 'played-in' during the editing stage so the timing will be less critical however it is still good practice to keep to the specific points highlighted in the visuals.

You maybe asked to re-do some of the questions, this may be for a variety of reasons but will mainly allow the Director to use different camera angles or shots so as to make the visual imagery more interesting for the viewer. You may also be asked to record some 'noddies'. These are cutaway shots used to cover up any edits and will consist of you simply looking at the presenter or other guests as if you are listening to what they are saying. It can sometimes seem a little unnatural with the tendency to want to speak or giggle but you must keep a knowledgeable look about you whilst this is being recorded.

There could be a break in the recording, maybe because of a sound problem or for a change of tape, you must maintain your composure so as not to ruin the continuity when the recording re-starts. For example having your legs crossed in one shot and uncrossed in the next or perhaps having a pen in one hand and then changing hands or your glasses on and then off. Keep a mental note of how you are presenting yourself.

This is even more crucial when filming a demonstration where it maybe necessary to repeat the entire demo several times so that the camera can film close-ups of the action. It is vital that you copy exactly the same action each time otherwise the sequence will not edit together.

AND FINALLY.....

Finally - it is a requirement that the Producer obtains a release form signed by all of the contributors to the production. This is only a formality and states that you have given your consent to take part in the programme on your own free will and that you will allow the Producer to edit the programme at a later date.