



MEDIA 101

LOOKING GOOD: A GUIDE TO BROADCAST INTERVIEWS



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Creating a Better World

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BROADCAST INTERVIEWS CAN BE A GREAT WAY TO GET YOUR MESSAGE ACROSS, BUT THERE ARE MANY POTENTIAL RISKS. THE GUIDE BELOW IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS AND HOW YOU CAN MAKE TELEVISION INTERVIEWS WORK FOR YOUR NSO.

1. PREPARE

Find out who will be doing the interview and try and find out a bit about them. What stories have they done before? What is their style? What might they ask?

2. UNDERSTAND THE TYPE OF INTERVIEW

LIVE – this kind of interview can be in a studio or down-the-line (on Skype etc). A LIVE interview may seem challenging, but being unedited could be the best way to share your story. Sometimes an interview will be recorded “AS LIVE” which means it will be recorded and edited for length/editorial reasons and broadcast at a later time/date.

A LIVE radio interview (where you’ll be in the same studio as the presenter and speaking into a large microphone) may not feel as intimidating as a TV interview. For a LIVE, you’ll probably be on-air for about 3-5 minutes, but will need to get to the studio 20 minutes or so beforehand for make-up and hair.

PRE-RECORDED – this will be edited into small 15-20 second “soundbites” for use in a package (broadcast story). The actual interview may take 20 – 30 minutes.

In both cases you should aim to be presentable and dress appropriately for the conditions. A polo shirt and trousers/shorts are perfectly acceptable at an outdoor event. Make sure the clothes are clean and you are too. Do not forget about your Scout scarf. If the interview is taking place in a virtual studio (“greenbox”) do not wear green clothes. In general, remember that checks, tartan, fine pinstripes and fancy patterns do not work well on camera, creating a “flicker” on the screen, and becoming distracting for the audience.

ON THE PHONE – in this case you’ll be speaking on the phone to a presenter/reporter in the studio. It could be LIVE or RECORDED. Generally, it won’t take as long as for a TV interview. Make sure you’re somewhere quiet where you won’t be disturbed.

3. MOTIVATIONS

Make sure you know why the journalist wants to interview you. Presumably they want to talk about Scouting, but they might be interested in a related issue - education, young people, or even a recent disaster where Scouts provided assistance. The more you know about why they want the interview the better – it will enable you to choose the most appropriate person to speak to them. And remember, as far as possible, we like young people to be the ones talking about Scouting. Do not expect to be given a list of the questions that will be asked.

4. BRIEF

Ensure the interviewee has all the information they need. Draw up some talking points, and practise. Think of the three key messages you want to get across. The person being interviewed should keep those points in mind throughout the interview and remain calm even if the journalist asks an unexpected question – an interview is like a conversation so a journalist will listen and ask questions about what has just been said. This is also why it's better to stick with your key messages.

5. DRESS APPROPRIATELY

There's a reason TV reporters tend to wear blue shirts or dark jackets. They look more polished on camera. Avoid wearing checks, stripes and patterns. Make sure your hair is brushed and tidy. If the broadcaster doesn't provide a make-up artist, bring your own powder (you don't want your skin to look shiny on set). Wear the Scout uniform or polo shirt where appropriate. If you're being interviewed out on a project then dress appropriately for the conditions.



6. PRACTISE

Whoever is being interviewed should practise.

Stand in front of a mirror and observe the way your facial expressions change. Try not to be too animated, but don't be too static either. Try to be natural.



Ask a colleague to ask you questions and record the discussion (you can use a mobile phone if you don't have a camera). Watch it back. How do you look when you listen? When you speak? How are you sitting/standing? What impression do you give? Do you fiddle with your hair or throw your hands about? Try not to.

7. IT'S ALL ABOUT THE VOICE

Try to speak from your diaphragm – not your throat, which will cause your voice to come out like a squeak. Don't rush – there's always a lot more time than you think.

Before you start the interview, drink warm water to loosen up your vocal chords.

8. THINK ABOUT WHERE YOU'RE LOOKING

If you're doing a live, look at the presenter and imagine you're sitting at home chatting to a friend (try to ignore the lights, the cameras and the set)

If you're doing a down-the-line, look towards the camera (or towards the top third of the computer if it's Skype) and imagine you're talking to a friend.

If you're doing a pre-record (for a comment that will be used in a package) look at the journalist and NOT at the camera.

9. WATCH WHAT YOU SAY

The microphone is always on. Watch what you say both before and after the interview. Never say anything inappropriate, as former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown discovered during that country's general election in 2010. Brown spent some time speaking to a supporter and, forgetting he was still wearing a microphone, derided her in the car afterwards. The incident prompted lots of media coverage, but not of the kind Brown was hoping for.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTr8IVWBuPE>



Notes

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Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



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