

# Interview Techniques

Interviews can be the most difficult to get right, some tips are:

- Communicate with the person being interviewed in advance and encourage them to feel confident and relaxed. Going over what you are going to do before hand can be important.
- It can help make an interview flow better and free of frequent “erm’s” if the person being interviewed (the subject) already knows and has had time to think about the questions that will be asked.

When possible it can be a good idea to give inexperienced subjects the questions written down well before hand and suggest they prepare their answers.

Often there may only be a few minutes available to grab an interview and there may be no time to talk about or organize it first.

It can help to ask a few general questions to start with which cover the areas of interest, these first questions can act as a rehearsal, more specific questions can follow to which better answers may be given, you can then just edit out the unwanted bits.

- If you are looking for a shorter interview suggest a time limit of half what you want, people will often speak for twice as long.
- Sometimes scripts are used, you may have seen TV people using large flip charts held behind the camera to help.
- The interviewer should be about the same distance from the microphone as the subject, if one is much quieter than the other change the distance.
- When shooting get as close as you can with the camera, otherwise sound quality may suffer and any background noise may cause problems. Some cameras have a headphone socket and volume control so you can hear what the camera is picking up. Many cameras will automatically boost the quieter sounds in-between the louder sounds so some background sound can get louder.

If there is too much background noise you may have to move to another location or wait till it passes or consider using a hand held or tie clip microphones if your camera allows them to be plugged in.

## Dealing with Newbie Guests

Guests who have never been interviewed before can be a challenge, especially if they are very nervous. It's important to reassure them and make them feel comfortable. Here are a few things you might find yourself saying to the nervous newbie:

"Just treat it as a normal conversation. There's no reason for you to worry about anything else that's happening. The best thing you can do to look good for the cameras is to ignore them."

"Don't worry if you make a mistake or muddle up your words - just carry on. It actually happens all the time in interviews, but because it's something the audience is used to seeing in everyday conversations they won't even notice."

"You look fine!"

*Note:* If the interview is to be edited, you can point out that any serious mistakes can be cut out.

## Pace Yourself (and Everyone Else)

Fatigue is the enemy. Interviewers and guests who are tired do not perform well, so be careful not to exhaust them. When preparing the set, use stand-ins to take their place while you set up the shots. Do not ask for multiple takes unless necessary (you will often find the first take is the best anyway).

## Clothing

Beware of clothing which is un-camera-friendly. This includes shirts and jackets with fine patterns which produce the moire effect. Dark glasses or caps which obscure/shade the eyes are not good.

## Be Prepared

Think about everything that could happen during the interview. Especially if you're shooting off-the-shoulder and there's a chance that your subjects could move around, you need to know how you're going to move. Try to ensure that unwanted bystanders aren't going to interrupt the Interview.

# Mobile Interviewing Techniques

## Shoulder-Mounted Camera

Shooting "off the shoulder" is an easy and flexible method for recording interviews. Typically this will involve one camera, although other cameras can be added easily enough.

This is the most common technique for field shoots in which speed and efficiency are important. A minimum of equipment is required and the production team can move around quickly and easily.

It is also a useful method if the surroundings are likely to be included in the interview. Because the camera operator is so mobile, (s)he can move around and show objects and scenery as they are talked about.

The standard technique is pictured here, with the camera situated just to the side of the interviewer. This gives a nice front-on shot of the guest. The interviewer and camera should be close together so the guest is facing just slightly off-camera.

Off-the-shoulder interviews tend to have quite a different feel to tripod/pedestal interviews. They are less formal, less restricted, and involve more movement. Because the participants are usually standing or moving around, the impression is given of being "up and about" rather than sitting sedately in a studio setting. Indeed, off-the-shoulder cameras are sometimes used in studio settings to achieve this effect.

The amount of movement involved depends on the production requirements. News stories tend to be quite static, concentrating on what the guest has to say and minimizing distractions. Programs which are more entertainment-focused may include a lot more variety, with the camera operator moving around and showing different angles of the guest, presenter and surroundings.

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## Tripod-Mounted Camera

You can use a tripod in much the same way as above.

Advantages:

- Nice steady shots - important if the interview will be edited alongside other tripod-mounted shots.
- Reduced fatigue for the camera operator, which will make a big difference if the interview is going to be long or if you'll be shooting lots of them. Off-the-shoulder shots can become wobbly as the operator begins to tire.

Disadvantages:

- You are much more restricted in terms of movement and framing.
- You have another piece of equipment to carry around (and good tripods are heavy).

## Walking and Talking

A nice effect is the walking IV in which the interviewer and guest stroll side-by-side toward the camera. The camera operator walks backwards maintaining a constant distance. Obviously this must be well planned. The camera operator should have someone to act as a guide - the usual routine is for the guide to place their hand in the middle of the operator's back and walk with them. In the example pictured here, the sound operator is doubling as the guide.

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## Field Kit Checklist

- Camera, tripod and plenty of tapes
- Batteries/power + multiboxes and extension leads
- Microphones
- Audio mixer, headset and leads
- Lights, stands and gels
- Video Monitor
- White balance cards
- Shot-log sheets, pen, etc.