

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE

Tips on how to conduct an on-camera interview

Appearing on camera can be nerve-wracking, the more comfortable a contributor is, the more engaging the interview footage (and final video) will be.

A good interview will get the best out of a contributor by helping them to act natural while feeling prepared.

PRE-INTERVIEW

Contributor:

- Arranging a pre-interview chat will give you the opportunity to explain the objectives of the film. Make sure they are briefed on what will happen at the interview, what is expected of them and that they have an opportunity to ask any questions they may have before the interview.
- Crucially the pre-interview should not cover the same ground that the interview will cover - in other words you want the first time they talk to you in detail about the subject to be on-camera so that it's fresh rather than rehearsed.
- Outline the areas you want to cover in the interview with the contributor, so they know what to expect on the day but avoid getting drawn into actually running the interview.

Tips:

- Decide on any b-roll the contributor will be involved in (e.g. filming them doing an activity).
- Doing a pre-interview is also useful in case the contributor mentions a prop (e.g. photo or object) that could be relevant (to illustrate a point) and you therefore have an opportunity to make sure they bring it along, or you have access to film it at some point and include it in the video.
- Before you record the interview, decide whether or not your voice (the interviewer's) will be 'present' in the video (in short branded content, usually the interviewer cannot be heard).
- Send the contributor the call-sheet for the day so they are aware of the schedule and will be on time and ready to shoot.

INTERVIEW/SHOOT-DAY

Logistics:

- Pick a well-lit, visually engaging spot at the location to conduct the interview. Set up as much as possible before the contributor arrives.

- On the interview day it is important to take time to make the contributor feel comfortable. Engage in small-talk unrelated to the video, offer them tea/coffee, and make sure they have water for the interview.
- Position the contributor in the spot.
- Adjust the lighting if necessary.
- Mic them up if using external mic/audio.
- Check sound levels (record some test audio).

Interview:

- When interviewing someone on camera it is important to engage in ‘active listening’ which puts the contributor at ease while remaining focused on their responses and guiding the interview.
- Make sure the contributor has a clear eye line and they consistently look in that direction (do not change mid-interview).
- Maintain eye contact as much as possible throughout.
- Keep your body language open (don’t fold your arms).
- Smile and nod to encourage and support the conversation. The contributor will most likely have prepared many of their answers so it’s important to make them feel relaxed, so their interview doesn’t feel too rigid or rehearsed.
- Get the contributor to introduce themselves (to the audience) by giving their name and their role (reason for being in the video).
- Go through the questions one by one. The first run-through will be probably be a bit stiff so make sure to schedule enough time to go through all the questions more than once if needed.
- Remind the contributor that your (the interviewer’s) questions will NOT be in the film, so get them to repeat the question within the answer, see example below:

Interviewer: ‘When did you start working at Google?’

Contributor: ‘In 2012.’

Interviewer: ‘When did you start working at Google?’

Contributor: ‘I started working at Google in 2012.’

- Reassure the contributor that they can stop and start again if they feel flustered.
- Don’t be afraid to follow-up on answers that might need more clarification, or to ask the contributor to repeat or re-word an answer if you feel there is a better, more succinct way of putting it. Always feel free to steer the answer to get the best or most useful content/dialogue.

- Don't be afraid to pause and adjust anything that might have moved out of place during the interview – e.g. the contributor's hair, the lighting, the microphone.
- Take note of anything said during the interview that you will need to illustrate on screen or that would make good b-roll (in addition to the shot list you have already prepared).
- If your contributor needs to sign a release form, get them to sign it before the interview and b-roll has been completed.

B-roll:

- Once the interview is over, schedule some time to film the contributor for some b-roll.
- If it's possible to do an activity related to the subject matter of their interview (e.g. their job) then film them doing that.
- Another option for b-roll is to film the contributor walking around the location.
- You will also need to capture b-roll of more general activity/objects/material.

Tips for interview questions:

- The interview questions will follow the structure of the video and shape the intro, middle (key messaging) and outro of the video.
- If for example you have 10 questions (altogether):

Qs 1-3 (intro section):

The contributor introduces themselves and the project or introduces the backstory of the project (topic of the video).

Qs 4-8

Contributor describes the important information regarding the project (e.g. the news story, new business, the event etc.) and highlights some key points about the project (or topic) - the most exciting and interesting things about the project.

Qs 9-10

The call-to-action (established in treatment) of the video (come to the event, find out more about the business, use this product) with a friendly sign-off/out of the topic.

It can be challenging to find a smooth way to finish the interview so think about the positive impact of the project and get the interviewee to reiterate that, or something encouraging like, *'We're really looking forward to welcoming everyone to the event....'*

- Always double-check the correct spelling of the contributor's name and job-title!