



How to Prepare for Media Interviews

Homework:

- Determine in advance how much ground the subject area will cover and which topics will be presented. Is the interviewer interested in a representative opinion from your “group” or are your personal views of chief interest?
- Learn the interviewer’s angle and whether the interview is to be closed or open. Will the interviewer seek factual information on a specific topic (closed) or pursue a general line of questioning (open) and depend on you to develop ideas and direction?
- Set objectives you want to accomplish. Prepare “mini-speeches” you can bridge into when the opportunity is right. However, do not rehearse your remarks until they are so pat that they sound canned.
- If you use visuals, check with the producer and director in advance on size and appropriate color or tonal contrast.

Physical Appearance:

- Wear medium tones—gray, brown or navy blue. Avoid pure white shirts. The color pink is flattering on almost everyone.
- People with very fair complexions and blonde, gray or white hair need to add color accents that provide warmth and richness, but not too much contrast (reds, royal blue, deep peach or Kelly green are flattering on most people). These colors can be incorporated in blouses, ties, or scarves against neutral or medium toned suits, jackets or dresses.

- People with very dark complexions should wear soft neutral colors near their face, such as pale peach, ecru, cream or pastel pink. Bright colors can be used in accessories such as ties and scarves.
- Avoid busy patterns, stripes, plaids, or checks.
- Avoid extreme contrasts such as black & white or red & black stripes or checks. This type of pattern can “crawl” (appear to move) on television.
- An interesting tie is OK as long as it is not a distracting pattern.
- Make sure you do not have “sock-gap”.
- Avoid large, elaborate or highly polished jewelry. It can reflect studio lights, clank against the microphone, or be distracting to the viewer.
- Women should wear regular makeup in natural tones. Those with especially fair complexions should use a blush, but avoid a high-contrast look. Bring along a compact powder in a natural tone to eliminate shine which the studio lights will accentuate.
- Women with very dark complexions should avoid neon red, orange, or plum shades of lipstick.
- Women should wear lipstick in a shade that compliments complexion. Avoid dark liners, dark brown, frosted or high gloss looks.
- Men may need to tone down a heavy beard or bald spot with professional makeup (the studio will usually supply this).

On the Air:

- Be yourself. Talk in ordinary conversational tones.
- Be natural. Look relaxed but do not slouch, throw your arms over the chair back, or cross and uncross your legs. Act as you would before any small audience, or imagine a good friend is in place of the television camera.
- Use eye language. Look directly into the eyes of the person talking to you. If there is a live audience, talk to various individuals in it. Resist the temptation to

look at yourself in the studio monitor. Do not stare blankly into space when others are speaking. Look directly at them.

- When answering a question, do not be rushed. Think out your answer even while the camera is rolling.
- Distractions to avoid: rapid hand movements, “um’s” and “uh’s”, repeatedly clearing your throat, foot tapping, rolling your eyes upward when answering a question.

This information was presented by Brigid MuHugh Sanner at an advocacy workshop in Dallas, Texas.