

Tips for Remote Media Interviews

For the time being at least, coronavirus has made face-to-face interviews a thing of the past. Here are some handy tips to help you prepare for an interview from your living room or spare bedroom.

INTERRUPTIONS

Choose a room where you won't be interrupted by members of your household.

Let your household know what you are up to so that they know not to disturb you.

The most infamous example of this was, of course, when Professor Robert Kelly was interrupted by his young family during a [BBC interview](#).



SET-UP

How many interviews have you seen recently where you seem to be looking at someone's chin, their nostril hair, light-fittings or at the ceiling?

Laptops must be elevated so that they are level with your face – using books or boxes if necessary (as long as they are stable).

A similar issue has been poor lighting.

Arguably the worst example of this came when Newsnight appeared to interview the ghost of Conservative politician [Iain Duncan Smith](#).

Don't sit too close to a window because you might look a little bit washed out – if you have no choice, try turning yourself side-on, so that you look softly lit from the side or try playing with the curtains to see what works.



BACKGROUND

A background such as a bookcase, artwork or even busy curtains can be distracting, choose a plain, uncluttered background and then test how it looks on camera before you go live.

[Michael Gove](#) recently found out that curtains can become the focus of attention, with some social media users suggesting the ones he recently sat in front of looked like they had been made from Stilton.



DRESS FOR THE OCCASION

Don't wear anything that could distract the audience from what you want to say – look the part in your interview.

It may have been a Facebook Live broadcast rather than an interview, but when [Nigel Farage](#) opted for short shorts, that sartorial choice dominated the resulting coverage, rather than anything he said.



PREPARE PROPERLY

Don't be lulled into a false sense of security by the more relaxed environment of your home. You still need to prepare properly.

That means knowing the message you want to get across in the interview and being prepared for the likely difficult questions that could be asked.

You might be tempted to have some notes or a crib sheet nearby.

But avoid this, as firstly you are likely to keep looking at them, which means you will lose eye contact. And secondly, you could sound scripted or over-rehearsed.

CONNECTED

Once you are connected, assume that you are on air or are being recorded.

You don't want to be caught on camera doing something embarrassing which may completely detract from what you have to say – remember what happened to Sainsbury's CEO Mike Coupe when he was filmed singing 'We're in the money' ahead of a down-the-line interview.

Remember that the interview hasn't finished until you hear someone say that you are 'clear' or the connection ends.

So, remain seated and looking at the camera even if you think the interview is over.

EYE CONTACT

The temptation with an interview carried out on online video technology is to look at the person on your screen.

But that looks like you are avoiding eye-contact on television.

Make eye-contact with your webcam and look right down the barrel of the lens to create the impression of eye-contact.

That can feel unnatural, so it is important to practice – regularly breaking that eye contact and looking away can make you seem shifty or uncomfortable.

DELAY

There is a good chance that you may experience a slight delay with the technology in your online interviews.

This can lead to some awkward exchanges where the journalist and interviewee keep speaking over each other.

To avoid this scenario in your online interviews, pause briefly before you start your response.

The added benefit of this is that it gives you a moment to plan your response and can make it seem that you are carefully considering your answer.

BODY LANGUAGE

Webcams place restrictions on what you can do with your facial expressions and body language. But, that said, body language is still important.

Make sure you have good posture and avoid slouching.

Good posture will help to give the impression that you are happy to be interviewed and have something to say.

Also, try to avoid the tell-tale signs of nerves, such as fidgeting with hair or glasses.



PRACTICE

Try to practice your interviews before you go on air.

If you have a few days before your interview is scheduled to take place, ask a colleague to carry out a mock interview with realistic questions, using the video technology you will use for the interview.

TONE

In these times of crisis, audiences are looking for spokespeople who show empathy and appear caring. They also want them to be open, honest and credible.

It can be difficult for spokespeople to show all of these characteristics. Some experts, for example, may struggle to show empathy.

But try to get as many of these factors across as possible – it will help ensure the audience pays attention to what you have to say.

SPECULATION

It has never been more important to stick to what you know in an interview.

Don't get drawn into speculating and predicting or commenting on areas beyond your expertise.

You don't have to answer every question. Stick to what you know and what the University is doing.

Remember, it is ok to say that you don't know the answer to a particular question, but go on to tell the audience what you do know.

Please also see [Tips on Talking to the Media](#)



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