

Event-in-a-Box

You're on ... Television!

Preparation is key to success:

- Before the interview, ask the reporter if he or she has specific questions or an angle planned for the story. Will the interview be for a community affairs program, newscast or feature?
- Know your topic:
 - Choose no more than five or six key points that you want to share.
 - If you will be talking about an event, be prepared to answer the basics: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How.
- News professionals are always looking for a story, so it's to their benefit to be friendly and professional. And, to yours as well, so you both can benefit.

Set things up.

- **Mind the details, such as:**
 - Where will the interview take place? In the television studio, your office, a field?
 - If in your office, try to choose a clutter-free spot (perhaps in a conference room) so the focus will be on the interview and not the background. Post a “Do Not Disturb” sign on the door and turn off the ringer on the phone and cell phone.
 - Ask whether the interview will be done live or taped for later use. For example, a studio interview for a regular news program will generally be live. If the reporter comes to your office, the interview will most likely be taped.
 - How long will the interview take? And, will it result in an interview segment? Thirty-second to 2-minute sound bite?
- For personal use, highlight bullet points on 3- x 5-inch cards. Use large type that is easy to read. Take the cards with you.

Ready ... set ... interview! (If you know your material, this should be easy.)

- An in-studio interview typically calls for an outfit that might be appropriate for a job interview or professional meeting.
 - For men, a suit with a light-colored shirt and solid color tie. Choose a light-colored shirt, rather than white, which can produce glare.
 - For women, choose solid colors with clean lines. Avoid bold plaids, patterns, ruffles and frills that distract. Also, avoid intense colors such as bright red or orange and deep hues, such as dark blue and, yes, even purple, that may show up as black. Leave clunky jewelry at home – a mike can pick up such noise.

- Be prompt. For a studio interview, arrive 15 to 30 minutes early in the “green” room. If the interview will be live, a makeup artist may need to prep you.
- Be direct. Answer in a concise, straightforward manner. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Offer to provide an answer after you've had a chance to research the question or, if you can, defer to another source.
- To convey self-confidence:
 - Smile.
 - Keep hands folded in lap, knees together or legs crossed at the ankle.
 - Look at your interviewer, not the camera – even before you are introduced.
 - Think of this as a conversation between you and that person, not between you and some faceless equipment.
 - Try to relax. If you need to take a deep breath before speaking, do so, but do it away from the microphone.
 - Maintain eye contact with the news professionals throughout the interview.
 - Make sure that your "nonverbals" are limited to gestures that support what you are saying. Don't tap the table, crack your knuckles, crumple note cards.
 - Enunciate clearly. Try to be clear in what you say, too.
 - Match tone and demeanor to the points that you are discussing. Don't joke and chuckle while outlining a serious issue or problem.

Follow up.

- Thank the interviewer for his or her interest and coverage.
- Leave a business card and fact sheet with your name and contact information.
- Ask the interviewer for his or her business card, in case you need to provide additional information later.
- Use the interviewer's contact information to address a **written thank you note** to your interviewer and any other appropriate person. Thank you notes typically are appreciated and often are helpful in building relationships that will help promote educational efforts.
- Keep the interviewer's business card so you will know whom to contact in the future.
- Ask if the interviewer knows when the interview will air. Reporters usually can give you an idea of the date and time an interview will be broadcast.
- Tape the program and use the tape to critique your interview skills. Of course, the more interviews you're willing to do, the more skilled you're likely to become!

*Source: Television Interviews
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