

Media Interviews: Method & Delivery



The small print

Prerequisites

Time in the classroom is precious – it is an opportunity for you to interact with the workshop leader and other participants through questions and discussions and to share your experiences and concerns. To make the most of this time we sometimes ask you to carry out learning activities ahead of the workshop so that everyone comes into the class with the same basic knowledge. We keep this prior learning to a minimum and often make use of online videos. Online videos provided through ‘Molly’ can be accessed by University members anytime, anywhere, through a browser or app.

Your course booking will tell you if any prior learning activity is required. If you don’t have an environment where you can do this learning, you can come along to one of our ‘quiet’ sessions. These are scheduled every week, and are a quiet space where you can work through ‘Molly’ videos or other workshop resources.

If you turn up to a workshop without having done the prior learning, the workshop leader may suggest that you come back on another session.

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About the workshop designer

Kieran Suchet has more than twenty years’ experience teaching across the UK and Europe. His effective use of communicating ideas through text and digital media has benefitted clients ranging from university students to top level government officials and industrialists. In tandem with his work in bespoke tutoring, Kieran works as an actor and writer and has just launched his own production company Fruit Bat Films.

Version	Date	Author	Comments
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Media Interview Course

1 Introduction

Welcome to this media interview course.

This booklet accompanies the course delivered by the University of Oxford IT Services, IT Learning Programme. Although the exercises are clearly explained so that you can work through them yourselves, you will find that it will help if you also attend the taught session where you can get advice from tutors, demonstrators and even each other.

If at any time you are not clear about any aspect of the course, please ask your tutor for help. If you are away from the class, you can get help by email via courses@it.ox.ac.uk

1.1. What you should already know

This session makes no assumptions about your existing knowledge or experience of media interviews. If you've never been interviewed for TV or radio before, that's not a disadvantage.

Equally, if you have been interviewed before, this will present an opportunity to improve and learn from your previous experience.

The course covers basic media interview skills, and will look to address any individual concerns head on.

This is a practically driven course, and attentive participation is key. The sessions will be a mixture of taught elements, class discussion, practical exercises and role play. It presents a range of techniques and skills for tackling media interviews with confidence and professionalism.

The course mainly focuses on broadcast interviews, but will also touch on elements which are relevant to print and online.

The computer network in the teaching rooms may differ from what you are used to in your College or Department; if you are confused by the differences ask for help from the tutor or demonstrators.

1.2. What you will learn

This session is not a comprehensive coverage of all aspects of media interviews but it is designed to draw your attention to some of the important concepts and useful skills.

In this session we will cover the following topics:

- The importance of energy, body language and image
- How to prepare for your interview
- Getting your messages across
- Dealing with difficult questions
- On & off the record
- After the interview
- Specific requirements for different interview set ups
- How to handle a TV studio interview
- How to handle a Down The Line (DTL) interview

1.3. What will I get at the end?

You will leave with a comprehensive grounding in the basics of media interviews.

Through a series of practical exercises, structured learning, class discussion and personalised feedback you will feel more prepared to handle media interviews with professionalism and confidence.

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Exercise 1 Presentation practise

Class discussion

2. WHAT MAKES A GOOD INTERVIEW?

Class Discussion

2.1 Good interview

What makes a good interview? What are journalists looking for from their contributors? What about the audience and readership?

2.2 Good interview experience

What constitutes a successful interview from the interviewee's point of view? How do you know if you have done a good job. Have you had any media interview experience? What was it like? What were the good and bad parts?

WATCH: TV interviews – 1) Interviewer errors 2) Embarrassing gaffes

Class discussion

3. GOOD ENERGY, BODY LANGUAGE & IMAGE

Communication is 93% non verbal. We will concentrate on the other 7% later, but it is important to know how to manage the visual communication strategies you have to become a great interviewee.

Human beings instinctively understand that body language powerfully communicates to those around us. However, when we are stressed or anxious, we can forget what an impact it makes, and that we have the power to consciously control it.

In interviews, people end up concentrating so hard on *what* they want to say, they forget to think about *how* they want to say it. Presence, delivery, tone, and gestures speak volumes to your audience, even if they can't see you.

Often, in the stress of an interview situation, people's body language closes down, can become defensive or intimidating, even if what they are saying is the opposite.

Becoming aware of your body language, knowing what makes a difference, and putting into practise conscious changes, can lead to a transformation in energy and impact.

WATCH: Good and bad body language video

3.1 Positive energy

Charm, charisma, presence – call it what you will, there is no denying that positive energy is highly attractive. It is star quality for a media interview.

We have all met people who radiate positive energy: the person who everyone notices walking into a room; who can captivate a crowd with a story; or who can stand up and deliver a spell-binding speech.

People may be highly educated, extremely skilled, or have years of experience, but if they cannot connect with the people they are talking to, they will struggle to communicate.

For media interviews, this becomes even more critical. The most qualified person may not be the best media spokesperson if they cannot engage with the public.

Charisma is not innate, it is a social skill. It can be learned and practised. There is no single strategy for cultivating it, but there are some techniques that will definitely boost your charm factor:

- Engage: really listen to the person talking to you. Charismatic people make you feel like you are the only one in the room.
- Confidence: have the courage of your convictions and focus on your strengths
- Be generous: with your attention, your time, your compliments.

- Positive actions: Make eye contact, smile, mirror body language.
- Remember names (use their name 3 times in conversation after being introduced to imprint it in your mind.)
- Make people feel great about themselves

People won't remember what you say, they'll remember how you made them feel.

3.1.2. Power poses

We know that our body language affects how other people see us, but now studies are showing it also shapes how we see ourselves.

Adopting a 'power pose' for just two minutes can change a person's hormones and alter how they feel, according to research by the University of California, Berkeley. Posture has a bigger impact on both mind and body than previously thought.

Choosing a powerful stance can lead to higher levels of testosterone, which is linked to confident, assertive behaviour. It can also reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

Even once a person has reverted to a normal, relaxed stance, the effect of the 'power pose' will linger on. This can be a powerful strategy before an interview.

Adopt these: "High Power" Poses (top row)

Avoid these: "Low Power" Poses (bottom row)

(images courtesy of A. Cuddy, Harvard University)



WATCH: TEDx TALK Amy Cuddy: Your Body Language Shapes your Mind

3.1.3. Breathing Exercises

Learning to manage your breathing can help you relax and focus before an interview.

Our breathing changes when we are anxious or nervous. We tend to take quick, short, shallow breaths. You want to avoid looking flustered and agitated.

Consciously slowing your breathing down will help you speak more calmly, and concentrate better. You should feel able to respond to questions in a more composed and confident manner.

Short mindful breathing or meditation exercises can instantly calm your breathing and focus your mind. Even if you have never done it before, a 5 minute pre-interview breathing session could help you de-stress and focus.

Exercise: Mini-mindfulness exercise

Take five deep, audible breaths, breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth. On the last exhalation, allow your eyes to close.

Take a few moments to observe your posture, and notice the sensations where your body touches the chair and your feet meet the ground. Feel the weight of your arms and hands resting on your legs. Acknowledge your senses: notice anything you can smell, hear or taste and sensations of heat, cold or wind.

Silently count the breaths: 1 as you inhale, 2 as you exhale, 3 on the next inhalation, and so on, up to 10. Then start again at 1. Spend 20-30 seconds just sitting. You might find yourself inundated with thoughts and plans, or feel calm and focused. Whatever happens is completely fine. Enjoy the rare chance to let your mind simply be.

Change Your Breathing, Change Your Life

Focusing on your own breathing can have a significant impact on your well-being and stress levels, awakening your mind and body while also lowering blood pressure and reducing anxiety. Here are seven big health reasons to stop and exhale.

1

STIMULATE BRAIN GROWTH

When controlled breathing is used during meditation, it can actually increase the size of the brain. Meditation that involves focusing one's attention on the breath has the capacity to increase cortical thickness, according to a 2005 Harvard study.

2

IMPROVE HEART RATE VARIABILITY

Low heart rate variability (the interval of time between heartbeats) has been associated with a greater risk of heart attacks. A 2012 study found that non-yogic deep breathing practices can improve heart rate variability in healthy test subjects.

3

LOWER STRESS LEVELS

If your breathing is shallow, your body is probably in "fight-or-flight" mode reacting to stress, says Ardito. Taking a minute or two to sit quietly and focus on your breathing helps your body achieve a state of calm, shifting from functioning out of the sympathetic nervous system (characterized by drive, flight and ambition) to the parasympathetic nervous system, which puts the body in a state of "relax and receive."

4

ALLEVIATE ANXIETY & NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

Many of us have felt short of breath during times of panic or stress. This is the body's natural reaction to a perceived threat, says Ardito. Focusing on breathing can help to alleviate anxiety, symptoms of depression, and other negative emotions. Last year, Australian researchers found that deep breathing 30 minutes before a performance effectively reduced musicians' performance anxiety.

5

REDUCE TESTING ANXIETY

A 2007 study published in the journal Teaching and Learning in Medicine found that students who practiced deep-breathing meditation before an exam reported perceiving less anxiety, self-doubt and concentration loss than the students who did not practice deep breathing.

6

LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE

Taking slow, deep breaths for just a few minutes a day could help to lower your blood pressure, according to Dr. David Anderson of the National Institutes of Health. While researchers have observed that slow, deep breaths can help to relax and temporarily dilate blood vessels, they don't yet know precisely why deep breathing has the capacity to cause a lasting drop in blood pressure. Anderson tells NBC News.

7

ALTER GENE EXPRESSION

A recent study found that mind-body practices like yoga, meditation and deep breathing exercises can trigger the body's "relaxation response," a physiological state of deep relaxation that alters the way it responds to stress. This state can counter the negative effects of stress for people with health conditions like anxiety and hypertension, by actually altering the expression of genes in the immune system.

Sources: U.S. National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, ScienceDaily.com, Teaching and Learning in Medicine: An International Journal, Harvard University's Athinoula A. Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging, Harvard Medical School, PLOS ONE, National Institutes of Health, American Heart Association, NBC News
Photo: Gerry

3.2 Body Language

Body language is a very powerful tool, particularly in interview scenarios. It's important to be aware of it, so that you can use it to your advantage.

If you are nervous, stressed, or anxious, you may start to unconsciously display signals which others read as defensive, evasive, or aggressive.

Thinking about your behaviour in advance means you can practise cultivating a relaxed, confident, positive demeanour for your interview.

3.2.1 Smile

Before your interview, smile. Even if you don't feel like it, put a pen in your mouth. It's been proven that the physical act of smiling can improve your mood, and it makes you seem friendly and approachable.

However, smiling during your interview may or may not be appropriate. You will need to judge. Grinning during a discussion of a company's mass redundancies or the death toll of a natural disaster would not be right.

If the content is suitable, it is generally a good idea to smile. People will usually respond with the same, and it fosters a good rapport with your interviewer, and ultimately the audience.

You can hear a smile. Even if you are interviewed on radio keep smiling. It comes across in your voice and listeners will notice.

3.2.2 Eye contact

Maintain eye contact throughout the interview and keep an open, friendly face, but don't stare. Too much eye contact is creepy, too little and you can seem insecure.

Good eye contact in an interview shows you are interested and paying attention. Poor eye contact translates as disrespect and disinterest. The interviewer will notice, and so will the audience.

3.2.3 Be open

Maintain open, approachable body language, which says you are alert, confident and attentive.

Sit up straight and try not to fidget. Put your hands in your lap when you are not using them to gesture. If you cross your legs, cross them towards the interviewer, not away.

If you are standing perhaps find something to lean on, or get into a comfortable stance and hold it. Try not to shift from foot to foot, it can look shifty.

Don't cross your arms, it looks closed and defensive. Try not to touch your body or face too much, it suggests anxiety and nerves, which an audience may interpret as untrustworthy or guilty behaviour.

BODY LANGUAGE DOs & DON'Ts

- Don't cross your arms
- Maintain eye contact, but don't stare
- Relax your shoulders
- Nod when you agree
- Sit up straight and don't slouch.
- Lean in, but not too much
- Smile, if appropriate
- Don't touch your face or body too often

3 PERSONAL IMAGE

The primary goal here is that you do not want how you look to detract from your message.

You want to be comfortable and smart, but you need to feel relaxed too. You don't want to be squirming in a too-tight jacket or a dress that is a bit short.

Plan your outfit in advance. See how it looks when you sit down. Make sure your clothes are clean and pressed.

Ask the programme or publication if they mind what you wear. They may have a preference (ie. the Daily Mail has a no jeans policy) or give you advice about what you should wear: some prefer more formal attire; others may be more relaxed; some may allow jeans; others might want a tie or shirt.

Take off any badges, keychains or lanyards. Don't wear sunglasses. It is important to see your eyes.

Even when going for a print interview it is worth thinking about what you're wearing. Journalists will often comment about what the interviewee is wearing, especially for women.

3.1. Clothes

For television interviews, don't wear anything with a small contrasting pattern or bold narrow stripes, because they will strobe on screen. Avoid big logos and comedy ties.

Ladies, think about hem lengths and how they might look if you have to sit down.

3.2. Location

Find out where you are going to be interviewed, it matters to your wardrobe. If inside, that will be straight-forward. But if it is an outside location, you need to be ready for the conditions.

Think about whether you need a coat, waterproofs, a high vis jacket, wellies, or an umbrella! You do not want to find yourself standing in a muddy field in high heels. Be prepared.

3.3 Grooming

Look clean and smart. Scruffy hair, spinach in your teeth, a straggly beard, all these things are distracting to the viewer and will ultimately detract from your message. Ask the producer or director if your tie needs straightening or if you need to comb your hair before you go on air.

3.4 Jewellery

Avoid anything too distracting or jangly, particularly necklaces or ear-rings. They can rattle against mics and you could be asked to take them off.

3.5 Make up

It is very unlikely that you'll get any professional make up. Only very high-budget, national TV programmes have make-up departments now, and even they might not have time to do more than a bit of powder and lip gloss if you are lucky. Don't expect to get a full face of make up, unless you are the presenter.

Do your make-up yourself before you arrive. Well applied, natural looking make-up is best.

Studio lights do drain you, so a good foundation, blusher / bronzer, decent eye make-up and some lipstick or gloss will do wonders. Do try a brighter lip colour or stronger eye if you feel bold. However it is not the time to try out a completely new look or a purple lipstick.

If in doubt, ask the director when you're there. They'll appreciate you seeking their advice and will give you an honest answer about whether that new lipstick is working for you or not.

3.6 Men

Men on TV wear make up. It's a fact. If you are going to be making regular TV appearances, think about getting a good foundation. Take a deep breath, go to a decent beauty counter (Clinique, Dior, Lancome, Chanel, MAC – all are used by professional make-up artists) and

ask someone to help you match a product that's the right shade for your skin tone. Don't do it yourself. Tell them you are appearing on TV and they will sort you out.

4 RESEARCH

"Fail to prepare and prepare to fail"

Research is the key to your success. Find out as much as you can before your interview.

To have a successful interview you want to feel confident, prepared and relaxed before, during and after. For that to happen you need to be ready for anything.

Terrible interviews happen when people are caught out. People get flustered when they are thrown an unexpected question; they get angry and defensive when they are put on the spot under pressure; or worse, they can clam up because they don't know what to say.

The best way to avoid that is preparation, preparation, preparation.

4.1. Interviewer

Find out exactly who's interviewing you. Get their full name and title if you can. Google them.

Read or watch as much as you can about them to get an idea for their style of interviewing. Jeremy Kyle is very different to Jeremy Paxman. The more information you have about them the more familiar and prepared you will feel.

Have a look at their online profiles and find out if you have any areas of commonality with them – maybe you went to the same university or have children the same age. It can all help to establish a connection, which will create a more comfortable and smooth interview process.

Know your journalist!

Search:

- Google
- Journalisted.com
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Facebook
- YouTube
- Etc, etc, etc...!

4.2. Publication or Programme

Have a good look at what your interview is going to feature in. It should give you a clear idea of what the interviewer will want out of you.

If you are being interviewed for Desert Island discs, it will be completely different to a grilling on Newsnight. Equally a chat on the BBC Breakfast TV sofa will have an angle that is different to a feature in the Daily Mail.

4.2.1 Audiences

Think about who the audience is and what they might be expecting from an interview. Consider how you can tailor your message to be meaningful for them.

4.3. Style

What kind of interview is it? Is it a one-to-one interview, will you be on a panel, or is it a head-to-head discussion? Will it be pre-recorded or live? If there are other guests, who are they? Make sure you research them too and find out if they are likely to support or spar with you.

4.3.1 Multimedia

Establish the format – will it be for radio, TV, online or print? – but bear in mind that many media outlets cover several platforms now.

While you might be booked for an interview with the local paper, they could turn up with a video camera to film a clip for their website. Equally you might go into record an interview with a radio station and be asked to stay to do a turn in the TV studio or give a clip for their website.

Different interview formats

- TV live (studio or on location)
- TV DTL (Down The Line – this might be in studio, or a Skype / Facetime call)
- TV pre record (studio or on location)
- Radio live (phone, studio or on location)
- Radio pre-record (phone, studio or on location)
- Print (phone or a pre-agreed location)
- Online (phone or a pre-agreed location)

4.4 Research yourself

Google yourself. Why? Because this is what the journalist will be doing. Anything that is online about you, they will find. You need to be ready to answer any potential questions that might be thrown at you.

Make sure you search through all the major search engines and social media sites, including, but not limited to: Google, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

You are not just looking for what you might have posted about yourself online, but what others might have tagged or mentioned you in. Clean up your accounts, and adjust your security and privacy settings if necessary.

The more contentious and embarrassing the material, the more important it is that you address it head on. You may not be able to change what is online, but you can prepare to answer questions on it, and not be ambushed.

4.4.1 Social media

Be wary of your social media feeds. Entire features have been written and broadcast without ever having contacted the individual concerned because programmes and publications can justifiably copy what's on their online platforms as legitimate "quotes". This doesn't just happen to celebrities.

4.5 Get Booked again...

99% of journalists are not out to get you. They just want a decent clip or quote to put in their piece. They usually aren't trying to trip you up.

However, they are probably stressed out, up against crazy deadlines, and extremely grateful if their interviewees turn up on time, are well prepared, and deliver confident, concise answers.

Journalists and producers remember good interviewees, and if you do a good turn once you'll get called again.

There are of course some occasions where journalists might be trying to catch you out, but if you've done your research, you'll be one step ahead and prepared to deal with any awkward questions head on.

5 QUESTIONS

It is highly unlikely that you will be given a list of the exact interview questions in advance. By all means ask, but don't expect it

5.1. Get the topics

Journalists should however give you a clear idea of the topics you will be asked about and the kind of subject matter you will be covering. Get as much information as you can (take notes!) to help you prepare.

Most broadcast journalists or producers will want to have a relatively in depth telephone chat with you before booking you. They are often looking for someone to give a particular point of view, or to have a specialist field of expertise, and need to judge if you will be able to give the answers they need. Don't feel undermined, they are not questioning your authority on this, they are just trying to get a feel for what your view might be on the subject to make sure it works for their programme or article.

5.1.1 Make a list

Once you have a clear idea of what you will be asked about, now is the time to prepare. Think about it like a job interview – you know the topics, so what questions would be likely to come up? Make a list.

Get the relevant facts and figures together. Learn a few critical ones, but don't obsess over numbers.

You might feel like you are the expert in your field already, but good journalists will have researched your area of expertise and will be looking to test you.

Remember, it is better to prepare for a question that never gets asked, than be stumped by a question during the interview.

5.2. Your message

Think about what it is you want to get across. Concentrate on three things you want to convey, and anything else you manage to get in will be a bonus. If you are aware of who the audience is, you should be able to tailor your message accordingly.

Learn what you want to say – and keep it short. TV clips will be about 15 – 20 seconds, any longer and it will just be cut.

You may have the luxury of taking notes with you if you are having an interview for print or radio, but who wants to be shuffling through bits of paper when you're on the spot?

You want to sound confident and knowledgeable, so learn your key points. Write a script if it will help, make some handy bullet points, but learn your lines – you want to have the information you need on the tip of your tongue.

At the same time, don't sound like a robot. Don't learn lines that you are just going to churn out regardless. The aim is natural sounding conversation, especially for broadcast interviews, or you will end up sounding like a politician who's not listening to the question.

5.2.1 Off limits

Is there anything you are worried about being asked about? Think about this in advance. Obviously this depends on the interview (celebrities get asked about their private life all the time, but you are unlikely to be chatting about your relationships, unless that is relevant to the article or programme.)

If there is anything you feel uncomfortable talking about mention it to the producer or journalist in advance. It is better to do this as early as possible, rather than when you have a microphone in front of you.

If certain subjects are off limits for you – say you don't want to talk about the results of your research until they have been officially published – then it is a waste of time for anyone to interview you if you can't have a full and frank discussion about it yet.

The more preparation you can do at this stage the less likely you are to get caught out when you are on the spot. The more you know your subject matter and feel confident the more relaxed you will be as well, which will come across in your interview.

5.2.2 Practise

Get your list of questions together and practise your answers. Practise, practise, practise. Do it out loud. If you can get someone to role play the interviewer, even better. Or do it yourself in a mirror to see how you come across.

5.3 Pre-Interview Checklist

It is a good idea to be prepared to feel as comfortable and relaxed as possible during your interview.

- Clothing - know what you are going to wear, and that it's suitable for the programme and publication
- Location - get clear confirmation of where you need to be and when.
- Contacts - get the name and mobile number for a contact on the day
- Research - the interviewer and the publication or programme.
- Prepare - think about the kinds of questions you are likely to get asked.
- Messages - remember what you want to say.
- Relax - take a few minutes to breathe beforehand.

6 THE INTERVIEW

6.1 Just before

If you are meeting on location or at a studio give yourself plenty of time to get to your interview. Don't give yourself added stress by rushing. Allow extra time for traffic, parking, signing in, finding the studio, going to the loo, getting a drink, etc.

If you are being interviewed at home or in your place of work, limit disturbances. Make sure colleagues know you can't be interrupted and divert incoming calls. Turn computer message alerts off and mute the sound.

In all cases, turn off your mobile. Properly turn it off. Even vibrations from text alerts or emails coming in can throw you off guard and make you lose your train of thought.

Mobile phone signals can also disrupt audio recording equipment, and it is extremely annoying to have to re-take an interview because a phone has beeped in the middle of it.

6.1.1 And relax...

Take a few minutes to breathe and skim your notes. You are just having a conversation. Give yourself time...

- to get used to the environment and go through your points.
- to ask silly questions - from where the camera will be pointing to where the toilets are located.
- to get a glass of water, you'll need it when your mouth gets dry.
- to make sure you have an awareness of what else is leading the news agenda in case you are sprung with a topical question on an unrelated issue.
- to do some power poses
- to do a quick breathing exercise
- to stand up or walk around while you wait. It is better than sitting hunched over.

Exercise 3

Prepare for an interview

6.2. Language

6.2.1 Jargon

I cannot stress this enough: ditch the jargon. You need to speak in plain English which everyone can understand. Avoid acronyms, technical terminology, and insider industry slang. Clear communication is key to getting your message across.

You don't need to dumb down, but you do need to communicate so you can be understood. Think about your audience. You are speaking to the general public, not your peers.

If you don't explain yourself clearly journalists and editors will simply cut out your clip. All the effort and research you have put in to preparing a fantastic performance will end up on the cutting room floor.

6.2.2 Use your own voice

Try to use your own voice rather than putting on a formal public speaking voice. Often this is as simple as not speaking too loudly. Speak as if you were talking with a group of friends.

6.2.3 Nerves

Watch for getting high pitched or screechy. Equally don't become monotone. It's much more interesting to listen to a voice with variety of tone.

6.3 Responses

6.3.1 Repeat the Question in your Answer

For broadcast interviews especially, it's really helpful if you can use the question at the start of your answer. This is a really good habit to get into.

Usually the reporter's question will be cut out, so for the audience to understand the full clip, it is very useful to have the question at the start of your speech.

For example:

{Interviewer} "So what made you decide to resign?"
{Interviewee} "To spend more time with my family."

It is hard to clip that answer into a self-explanatory clip. This would be better:

{Interviewer} "So what made you decide to resign?"
{Interviewee} "The reason I decided to resign was because I wanted to spend more time with my family."

Also, repeating the question back to the interviewer ensures that you have heard them correctly and will help focus your answer.

6.3.2 Keep it short

Be succinct. That doesn't mean short, clipped answers, but don't ramble on. Most journalists will ask if they want more information, or would rather you explained something in a more condensed way.

Don't feel compelled to keep talking. Journalists will leave silences to allow you to give a full answer, as interruptions are difficult to edit.

Most responses to questions should be around 30 seconds, but don't feel confined by this if you feel something deserves a longer response.

You should not feel nervous when no one is talking. When you have made your point, stop, and wait for the reporter to ask you the next question.

6.4 Ignore the cameras

Easier said than done. Interview scenarios and studio environments are manipulated set ups and cameras can be intimidating bits of kit. Do your best to focus on the interviewer, maintain eye-contact, and ignore the gear around you.

6.5 Take your Time

Appear confident even if you are a nervous wreck inside. Remember all the prep work you have done. No one is going to believe in what you are saying if you don't believe it yourself. Fake it til you make it!

Take a nice deep breath before you speak. Your breathing and speaking rate should be steady and calm so you have time to think about what you are saying. This will help to avoid those awkward "ums" and "ahs".

Try not to interrupt the presenter or other guests – especially on radio. Your turn will come. Hand gestures can help you make your point but try not to use them excessively.

6.6 Be careful

Don't get over-confident and remember that the camera and microphones will be on even when the interview has finished. You will have seen many politicians caught out this way.

6.7 Difficult questions

Hopefully you will have prepared for this in advance, however, everyone can get caught out.

If you know you will be facing difficult questions, you will know what you want to say, and will have practised your answers. Deliver your responses with confidence, professionalism and sincerity.

If you are surprised by an unexpected question, take your time to think about what you want to say. Even in a live interview you can still take a deep breath and consider your response.

6.7.1 No comment

Avoid saying “no comment.” It makes you look guilty, defensive and untrustworthy: like you are being questioned by the police. It is a much-heard response, but generally from celebrities or people outside court.

If you can't comment on a point, use a transitional phrase, such as “I'm not an expert on that subject, but...” and return to your message points. It is much nicer, and more normal, to say something polite but firm like “I'd rather not talk about that subject.” Say it with a smile.

Be prepared, most journalists will probably try to ask you the same question from another angle if they are being dogged about it, so hold your ground with a smile and a “thank you, but I really can't discuss that now” or something similar.

Above all, be polite, but firm, and keep smiling! You want to keep the journalist and the audience on side. Becoming defensive or monosyllabic is a quick way to lose face and destroy any rapport you have developed with the interviewer.

Beware: any unanswered questions will probably end up on the cutting room floor, but a defensive, aggressive rant is dramatic, entertaining, and highly watchable.

6.7.2 On and Off the Record

Let me be clear: there is no “off the record.”

When you are speaking to a journalist, they are working. Even if they are not taking notes or recording you, they are picking up on everything you are saying and observing your behaviour.

If you want to tell them something, but don't want to be identified make sure that it is absolutely clear that you want to make a comment anonymously and you have agreed upon this beforehand. It is extremely difficult to retract what has been published, put on-air, or gone online.

6.7.3 Steer the conversation

If a reporter asks a question you cannot or won't answer, you might say, “I can't address that issue, but I can tell you...” or “That is interesting, but the issue here is...” Acknowledge their question, and then steer the conversation towards one of your message points.

6.7.4 Corrections

Do not repeat negative words or inaccurate facts included in a question. Simply correct the inaccuracies and shift to an appropriate message point.

6.7.5 Don't lie

Whatever you do, tell the truth. This might be obvious, but you would be surprised. Any lies you tell will be on record. They could also remain online forever. Answer questions truthfully, frankly, and as succinctly as possible.

6.7.6 Genuine mistakes

If you make an honest mistake (ie. get facts, figures, or a name wrong) admit it as soon as possible, so it can be corrected at the earliest opportunity. Most journalists do strive for accuracy and want to get facts right.

6.8 Keep your audience in mind

The reporter you are speaking with is not your target audience. You are speaking to people as they watch the TV news in their living rooms, listen to the radio in their cars, or read the news on the train.

Communicate in a way that engages them. Speak “real English,” don’t use arcane jargon, and always try to translate your “news” to their lives in a way that is relevant and compelling.

6.9 Your Contribution

If your interview was pre-recorded it could have lasted for 10 minutes or more. Bear in mind that the reporter is likely to take out a clip of a few seconds (possibly just 15” - 30”) for the final piece.

Brevity is not a reflection of poor performance. It does not mean your contribution was a waste or that you didn’t interview well.

Reporters use interviews for many reasons. As well as getting a sound bite, they use them to gather material, confirm information, and get background details.

While your clip or quote may only result in a short time on-air, the contribution you make will likely be much greater.

Exercise 4

Pre-recorded TV interview

Special Tips: DTL (down the line) or video link Interviews (ie. Skype/FaceTime)

- Ask for an equipment test before you go on-air
- Look straight into the camera – try not to look at yourself if you have a visual
- You might not be able to see your interviewer, but talk to the camera as if it were a person with whom you are having a conversation.
- Place a card or sticky note with the interviewer’s name and location under the camera lens.

Special Tips: Radio Interviews

- Keep answers short and lively.
- It is okay to refer to notes, but don’t read directly from them.
- Remember – you need to convey sincerity and enthusiasm through your voice. SMILE – they will hear it in your voice!

Special Tips: Print Interviews

- Remember jokes and sarcasm might not translate well in print.
- Most writers will agree to read back your quotes to you (time permitting) over the phone.

- They may agree to word alterations (ie. for corrections) but it is at the writer's discretion.

7 AFTER THE INTERVIEW

7.1 Before you leave

Ensure they have your best contact details (ideally a mobile no) in case they need to check any information with you.

Reporters might want to double check facts or figures, or if the story develops quickly, may need to come back to you for another quote or update.

7.2 Follow up

Send a quick email or text thanking the reporter for their time. Again, include your best contact details.

7.3 Publishing

If the interview was not live, find out when it will be broadcast or printed. This may be very fast, often within a few hours for TV, radio or online platforms. However print media may be several days or weeks away from publishing your quotes.

7.4 Getting a copy

It is extremely rare to get given a copy of your interview. Media companies simply do not have the staff to produce extra copies of interviews for their many contributors.

Find out when it is being published and make sure you reserve copies of the publication, or if it is being broadcast, record it.

If your interview formed part of a larger piece or feature, record the whole programme. Segments can get moved last minute and the time you thought your piece would appear can change.

Further information

Getting extra help

Course Clinics

The IT Learning Centre offers bookable clinics where you can get pre- or post-course advice. Contact us using courses@it.ox.ac.uk.

Study Videos from Molly

Molly is our collection of self-service courses and resources. This includes providing LinkedIn Learning video-based courses free to all members of the University. Visit skills.it.ox.ac.uk/molly and sign in with your Single Sign-On (SSO) credentials.

Some courses recommend pre- and/or post-course activities to support your learning. You can watch these online videos anywhere, anytime, and even download them onto a tablet or smartphone for off-line viewing.

If you need a quiet place to work through learning activities away from distractions, the IT Learning Centre offers 'quiet' sessions where you can book a place. These are scheduled frequently during normal term times.

About the IT Learning Portfolio online

Many of the resources used in the IT Learning Centre courses and workshops are made available as Open Educational Resources (OER) via our Portfolio website at skills.it.ox.ac.uk/it-learning-portfolio.

About the IT Learning Centre

The IT Learning Centre delivers over 100 IT-related teacher-led courses, which are provided in our teaching rooms and online, and we give you access to thousands of on-line self-service courses through Molly (powered by LinkedIn Learning).

Our team of teachers have backgrounds in academia, research, business and education and are supported by other experts from around the University and beyond.

Our courses are open to all members of the University at a small charge. Where resources allow, we can deliver closed courses to departments and colleges, which can be more cost-effective than signing up individually. We can also customize courses to suit your needs.

Our fully equipped suite of seven teaching and training rooms are usually available for hire for your own events and courses.

For more information, contact us at courses@it.ox.ac.uk

About IT Customer Services

The IT Learning Centre is part of the Customer Services Group. The group provides the main user support services for the department, assisting all staff and students within the University as well as retired staff and other users of University IT services. It supports all the services offered by IT Services plus general IT support queries from any user, working in collaboration with local IT support units.

The Customer Services Group also offers a data back-up service; an online shop; and a PC maintenance scheme. Customer Services is further responsible for desktop computing services – for staff and in public/shared areas – throughout UAS and the Bodleian Libraries.

Media Interviews: Method & delivery



Kieran Suchet
Kieran.suchet@it.ox.ac.uk
courses@it.ox.ac.uk



1

Your safety and comfort are important

Life doesn't stop because we are working from home!

Please feel free to:

- Get up and stretch
- Answer the door
- Take a comfort break

Just let us know in the meeting chat & turn off your camera and mic.

2



We are going to cover...

3

Are you sitting comfortably?



What is:

- Your location? Is it secure? Well lit? Noises off? Background view?
- The state of your tech? Broadband connection speed? Camera resolution? Mic level? Camera ANGLE?
- Are you dressed appropriately?
- Do you need 5 mins to reset?



4

Exercise: Presentation



5

What makes a good interview?

What makes an interview good as a **viewer**?

What does a successful interview mean for you as
an **interviewee**?

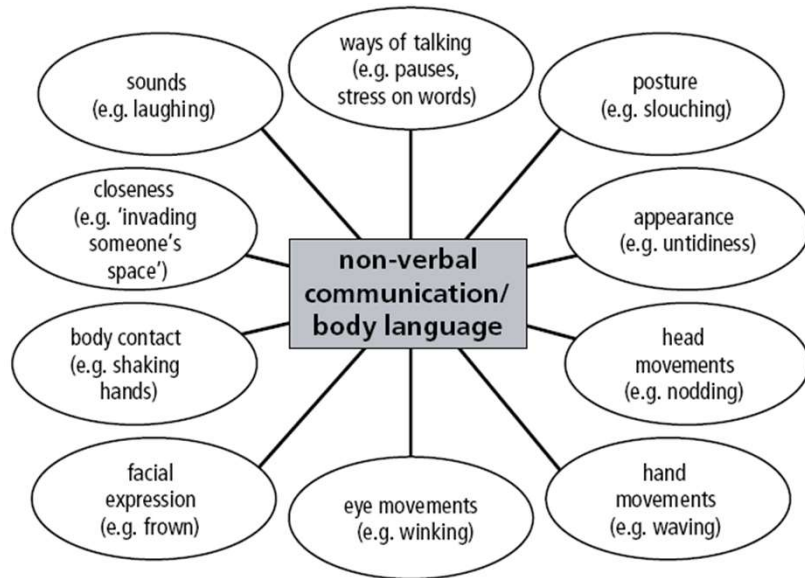
6

Good energy, body language & image

93%
non-verbal



This concludes my lecture on non-verbal communication. Any comments or questions?



7

Presence



8

Power poses

Adopt these: "High Power" Poses (top row)
 Avoid these: "Low Power" Poses (bottom row)

(images courtesy of A. Cuddy, Harvard University)



9

And breathe...

Change Your Breathing, Change Your Life

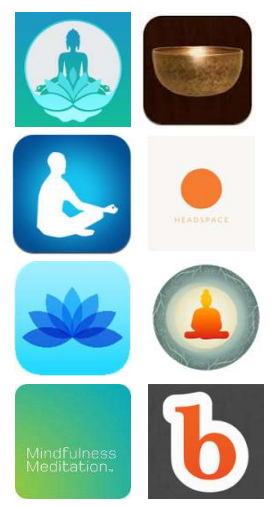
Research on your own health can have a dramatic impact on your well-being and stress levels. Discover the science of breathing and how it can help you live a healthier, more productive life.

- STIMULATE BRAIN CONNECTIONS**
Deep breathing increases blood flow to the brain, which can improve cognitive function and mood.
- REDUCE HEART RATE**
Slow, deep breaths can help lower your heart rate and blood pressure, reducing stress on your cardiovascular system.
- IMPROVE POSTURE**
Breath-holding exercises can strengthen the muscles in your back and neck, helping to improve posture and reduce pain.
- ALLEVIATE ANXIETY**
Deep breathing can activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps to calm the body and reduce anxiety.
- REDUCE STRESS HORMONES**
Regular breathing exercises can help lower levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, leading to improved overall health.
- IMPROVE SLEEP**
Breath-holding exercises can help improve the quality of your sleep by increasing oxygen levels in your blood.
- BOOST ENERGY**
Deep breathing can increase oxygen intake, which can help boost energy levels and improve focus.
- LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE**
Regular breathing exercises can help lower blood pressure, reducing the risk of heart disease.
- IMPROVE DIGESTION**
Deep breathing can help stimulate the digestive system, improving digestion and reducing bloating.

My Anxiety Cure

Research from **163 DIFFERENT STUDIES** suggested that mindfulness- meditation practice had an overall **POSITIVE EFFECT** on improving anxiety and stress.

ACCORDING TO NEUROSCIENTISTS as you continue to meditate your brain **PHYSICALLY CHANGES**, even though you're not aware of it **RE-SHAPING** itself.



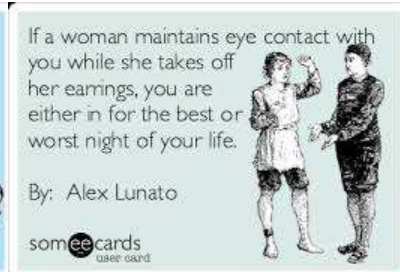
10

Eye contact

Keep your attention on your interviewer

TV interview distractions:

- Cameras
- Studio kit
- Audience
- Public
- Ear pieces



11

Positive signals (summary)



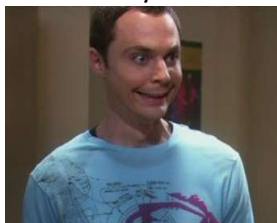
Open body language – don't cross your arms



Relax your shoulders



Sit up straight - don't slouch



Smile, if appropriate



Keep eye contact, but don't stare



Don't touch face / body too often

12

Impromptu speeches

- Smile
- Eye contact
- Breathe
- Relaxed body language

13

Personal Image



14

Make up...



Tips:

- Keep it natural and polished
- Use a good colour-matched concealer or foundation (yes, men too)
- Combat areas of shine with a tissue – then pat on powder
- Check for stray hairs
- Focus on your eyes
- Wear lip colour
- Blusher / bronzer
- Ask the director

15

Appearance summary



16

RESEARCH

Confident
Relax
fluent.ai
Be understood

BY FAILING TO PREPARE, YOU ARE PREPARING TO FAIL.

Benjamin Franklin

17

Broadcast interview formats

PHONE HACKING SCANDAL
Rebekah Brooks is meeting Rupert Murdoch in London
BBC NEWS 19:10 WAS NOT HANDED TO THE METROPOLITAN POLICE

DAVID NICHOLS
Leics & Rutland Fed of Small Businesses
BBC EAST MIDLANDS TODAY

ONLINE BLACKMAIL
Victims lured into taking sexual videos of themselves
BBC NEWS

BBC RADIO LIVE FIVE LIVE

LIVE Scarsdale

BREAKING NEWS
Environment Agency has issued 80 flood warnings
BBC NEWS 15:17 AM 76 AREAS ACROSS THE UK LISTEN TO

LIVE Bank, Epsom

GLOBAL BBC NEWS

18

Down the Line - what not to do!

A



B



19

Interview styles



One-to-one - live



One-to-one Pre-recorded



Panel – as live



Mixed views - live

20

Know your Interviewer



21

Exercise: Interview preparation

You each have to prepare for a pre-recorded interview with a particular TV programme.

In pairs /small groups work together to get ready for your appearance.

You can use the internet to research your programme and its interviewer, and make notes.

Time 15-20 mins

22

Research yourself



23

Your message



24

Pre-interview checklist

- Clothing: suitable for programme
- Location: where and when
- Contact: a name, mobile and email
- Research: interviewer, programme, audience
- Prepare questions
- Messages: learn your lines

25


THE INTERVIEW...just before



26


Language

LOL PLZ TY
TYT U L8R
SUP W8 G2G
TTYT TIA WOOT



“There are too many abbreviations in your report – can you rewrite it asap?”

JARGON

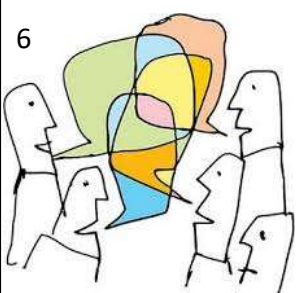


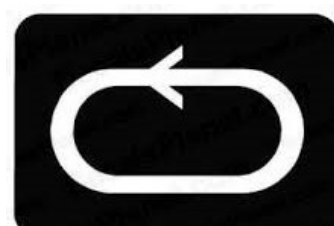
WE NEED SOME NEW JARGON, THE PUBLIC ARE STARTING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT!

IN ENGLISH, PLEASE!


27


Responses


6 

1  REPEAT

2 **KEEP IT SHORT**

5  NO COMMENT

4 

3 

28

On and Off the record



"this is strictly off the record..."



"By the way, is this off the record?"

There is NO off the record

29

Special tips



DTL TV

- Do an equipment test
- Look straight into the camera
- Don't look at yourself if you have a visual
- Talk to the camera as if it were a person
- Make sure your ear piece isn't too loud – it can be distracting



RADIO

- Keep answers short and lively.
- It is okay to refer to notes, but don't read directly from them.
- Remember – convey sincerity and enthusiasm in your voice.
- SMILE – you can hear it.
- Radio stations often have studio cameras, so don't dress down.



PRINT

- Jokes and sarcasm may not translate well in print.
- Most writers will agree to read back your quotes (time permitting) over the phone.
- They may agree to word alterations (ie. for corrections) but it's at the writer's discretion.

30

Oxford University past performances

Watch these different types of performances by your colleagues. Think about: *dress code, demeanour, body language, eye contact, location, voice pitch/tone and **most importantly message***. What can you learn from their performances?

On Location pre-record (watch 3:24 – 6:03)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mm8F6A_693E&t=286s

Studio panel live (pay particular attention to the 3 participants' concluding message) <https://youtu.be/2WCXguRVwpU>

DTL (as) live (watch 16:18 onwards) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000hk96/the-andrew-marr-show-19042020>

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Exercise: pre-rec TV interview

We will now practice a short pre-recorded TV interview.

Everyone will have the opportunity to experience a 5 min sit down interview recorded on video camera.

Other candidates will view and give constructive comments and feedback.

5 - 10 mins per person

[Newsnight interview example](#)

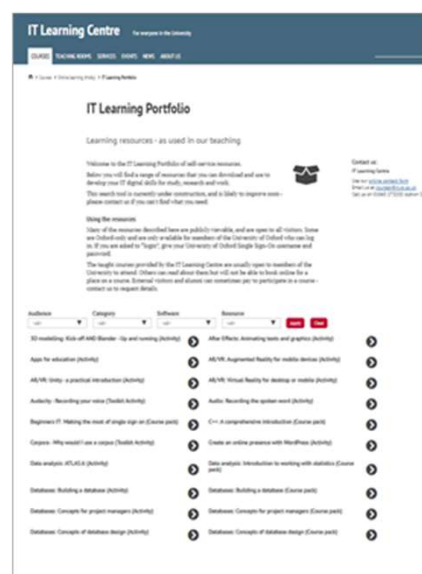
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Post-interview

33

Find the resources for the workshop in our IT Learning Portfolio

Download the files (and more) from the IT Learning Portfolio at <https://skills.it.ox.ac.uk/it-learning-portfolio>



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