

# Media Interviews: Method & Delivery online





## 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.

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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](mailto: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.

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## 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.





## 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.

Search:

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

Know your journalist!

### **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 Dessert 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](mailto: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](https://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 the 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](https://skills.it.ox.ac.uk/it-learning-portfolio).

Find the pre-course activity for this course in the IT Learning Portfolio: visit [skills.it.ox.ac.uk/it-learning-portfolio](https://skills.it.ox.ac.uk/it-learning-portfolio) and search for "video activity".

### ***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](mailto: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

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[courses@it.ox.ac.uk](mailto:courses@it.ox.ac.uk)



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# Ready To Learn?





- Today's session takes place in a video-call using *Teams*
- You can turn on Live Captions using 
- Don't plan to multi-task 

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# We are going to cover...




1



2




6




TODAY



5



4



3

4

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We are going to cover...

DOWN

THE



LINE

INTERVIEWS  
(DTL)

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5



Are you sitting comfortably?

What is:

- Your location? Is it secure? Well lit? Noises off? Background view/blur it?
- 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?



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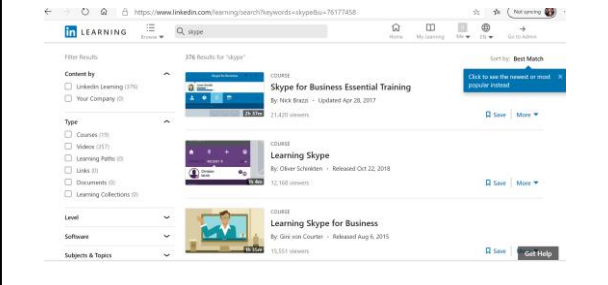
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Learn video meeting platforms

<https://skills.it.ox.ac.uk/linkedin-learning>



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Exercise: Presentation



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What makes a good online interview?

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

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

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Good energy, body language & image

93%

non-verbal



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

sounds  
(e.g. laughing)

ways of talking  
(e.g. pauses, stress on words)

posture  
(e.g. slouching)

appearance  
(e.g. untidiness)

head movements  
(e.g. nodding)

hand movements  
(e.g. waving)

eye movements  
(e.g. winking)

facial expression  
(e.g. frown)

body contact  
(e.g. shaking hands)

closeness  
(e.g. 'invading someone's space')

non-verbal communication/  
body language

10

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### Psych yourself up

Exercise – Healthy body, healthy mind

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

(Images courtesy of A. Cuddy, Harvard University)



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### Eye contact (online)

Look down the camera lens AT ALL TIMES – do **NOT** look at your own image  
online interview distractions:

- Noises off
- Kids
- Pets
- Glitches
- Spills



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### 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

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Impromptu speeches

- Smile
- Eye contact
- Breathe
- Relaxed body language

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16

Personal Image



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17

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

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18

Appearance summary

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RESEARCH

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Broadcast interview formats

Studio interview      On location      DTL Down The Line

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Down the Line - what not to do!

A



B



22

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Interview styles



One-to-one - live



One-to-one Pre-recorded



Panel - as live



Mixed views - live

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Know your Interviewer



Jeremy Kyle



BBC RADIO 2



YouTube



Top Gear

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Research yourself



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Your message

5 PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

4 DANGER THIS AREA IS OFF LIMITS

1 3

2 LEARN YOUR LINES

3 Sound bites: 15 - 30 seconds

27

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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

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THE INTERVIEW...just before

1

2

3

29

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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 again?"



**JARGON**



WE NEED SOME NEW TARGON.  
THE PUBLIC ARE STRUGGLING TO  
UNDERSTAND WHAT WE'RE  
TALKING ABOUT!

IN ENGLISH, PLEASE!

30

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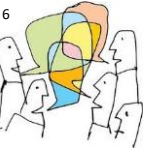
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Responses


6

1


REPEAT


2

**KEEP IT  
SHORT**

5

NO  
COMMENT

4

3

31

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### Post-interview

1

2

3

4



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### Oxford University past performances

Watch these different types of appearances 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](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mm8F6A_693E&t=286s)

**Studio panel live** (pay particular attention to the 3 participants' concluding messages – whose is best?) <https://youtu.be/2WCXguRVvpU>

**DTL (as) live** (watch 16:18 onwards) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-S\\_Pqt1A\\_I&ab\\_channel=RachelMartinRachelMartin](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-S_Pqt1A_I&ab_channel=RachelMartinRachelMartin) Sarah Gilbert, Professor of Vaccinology

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### 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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Course clinic - [courses@it.ox.ac.uk](mailto:courses@it.ox.ac.uk)



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