

HAYES
COLLINS / **MEDIA**

Interview Context

How to stand, where to look and what to wear

- **Stand still:** swaying is very distracting to the audience so plant your feet firmly. If you're presenting, feel free to walk around a little, but don't pace up and down!
- **Look at the journalist not the camera:** you might feel a little uncomfortable starting into the reporter's eyes, but any eye movement can make you look shifty - never a good look! You could pick a spot other than their eyes (nose, top button of their shirt) - the important thing is to keep a steady gaze.
- **Slow down:** a bit of pace is fine - it shows you are enthusiastic - but make sure the audience can follow what you're saying. If it's an aggressive or defensive situation, speaking more slowly makes you appear more in control and less nervous. Leaving a slight pause after your most important messages lends them gravitas (though don't leave it too long or the reporter will think you've lost track of what you're saying and leap in).
- **Use the full range of your voice:** your vocal intonation will help the audience pick up on the sense of what you're saying so don't neglect this important tool. Avoid a flat monotone as the audience will lose interest if you don't sound interested yourself.
- **Smile:** if you're talking about something positive. But don't smile if you're talking about something serious. The important thing is for your message and your facial expressions to be congruent.
- **Use targeted gestures:** small, controlled gestures are fine, but avoid waving your arms around randomly or bringing them in front of your face. Try to use gesture to emphasise key words, and avoid aggressive gestures, such as pointing at the reporter.
- **Remember to breathe!**



What Not to Wear

- **Send a message:** as with your tone and facial expressions, the important thing here is that your clothes should enhance and support your message, not work against it. You also need to think about the context in which you are being interviewed and what other people will be wearing - do you want to stand out or blend in? For someone like Mark Zuckerberg, *not* looking like a standard CEO is very important, but if your organisation is in financial trouble, then your audience may find a more traditional formal suit reassuring.
- **Don't neglect the details:** shiny shoes, dandruff-free shoulders, neat hair. Many people will spot a lack of attention to detail in dress and wonder if you pay attention to the detail of your organisation.
- **One statement piece only:** if you're wearing a bold piece of jewellery, don't also wear dramatic shoes (unless you're talking about London Fashion Week, in which case, go ahead). The audience doesn't need visual distractions - they want to listen to you.
- **Many people flush when nervous:** if that's you, then wear a higher necklace or a scarf. You don't want to be worrying about anything other than your messages.
- **Beware the sofa:** if you are being interviewed on a sofa - for example on Breakfast TV - be aware that skirts have a habit of riding up when you're sitting, and knee-length can become thigh-length. If you're wearing trousers, socks will probably be exposed, so make sure they are not the novelty pair you received from the office secret Santa!

Context and background

- **Where you are being interviewed makes a difference:** the background should be either neutral or help to tell the story, not interfere with the messages. If you are trying to say it's business as usual for your company, do you really want to be interviewed outside your building with protestors in the background?
- **What does that sign spell out:** if there's a sign in the background, make sure it doesn't spell out a rude or inappropriate word from any angle when your head is in front of it - many a politician has been caught out this way.
- **In a crisis, you need to be on site:** look at footage of Richard Branson being interviewed after a Virgin train derailment in Scotland.

In reality, he would probably have been much more use at Virgin HQ, directing the response, but can you imagine how it would have looked if Mr Branson was interviewed in his palatial office in contrast to the emergency services working in the cold and rainy Scottish countryside. Quite rightly, he made the decision to get down to the site and appear connected to the crisis response.

- **If you are being interviewed outside, check where the sun is:** squinting into the sun won't help you - don't be afraid to ask to move if you're not comfortable.

To summarise, if your voice, facial expressions, clothing and context support your messages, then you are giving them the best possible chance of being received by your audience in the way that you want them to be.

Good luck!