

TV Tips & Tactics

Preparation

- Develop your key messages and know how to deliver them effectively prior to your interview. To get a sense of the host's style and show's format, watch the show before you go on. What's the format of the show? Live? Live-to-Tape? Call-In? One-on-one interview? Debate? Is it liberal? Conservative? What other guests have been booked? What point-of-view are you expected to fill? Is she impartial? Is she combative? Does she use her questions as a way to ambush her guests?
- Ideally, you'll have a chance to watch the show several times before your appearance. If you can't, milk the producer for as much information as possible before you agree to do the show. Look for transcripts on their Web site.
- Role-play with one of your colleagues prior to your interview. The role-play should mimic the show in length and style.
- Always choose an in-studio interview over a satellite interview. You'll have a better opportunity to establish a rapport with the host – which will strengthen your appearance.
- If you want to improve, watch and critique your interview.

In the Studio

- When interviewing in studio, don't look at the camera, make eye contact with the host.
- Smile! It will help you to relax; it will project confidence and will help to win over your audience.
- If the host is combative, don't be afraid to sit closer and touch her arm and smile – it will make it harder for her to be nasty to you.
- If she's got you on the defensive, interrupt her, but do it with a smile. Keep interrupting to repeat your messages. As long as you keep a smile on your face, you won't seem rude.
- Don't be fooled by a host who is as sweet as sugar before the show begins; she may turn into an attack dog as soon as the show goes live.
- Don't be distracted by the stage crew.
- Refer to the show or the host by name – it's always a sign of a seasoned pro.
- Assume that everything is being recorded, so don't make any off-the-cuff remarks.
- Use natural hand gestures that don't distract.
- Remember that every "um" and twitch is magnified, so relax, breathe and ground yourself.
- When the interview is over, sit still until the producer or host tells you that you are done.

Via Satellite

- Make sure the audio earpiece fits properly. Alert the producer or technician immediately if it doesn't stay in your ear or if sound is cutting in and out.
- If your opponent is in studio and you're via satellite, you are at a disadvantage. To even the playing field, be conversational, smile and interrupt if needed.
- Although it may feel awkward, always maintain eye contact with the camera in via satellite interviews; otherwise you will appear shifty-eyed, and it will distract viewers from your message.

Your Message

- Make sure to get out your key messages in your first answer – you may only get one opportunity.
- Repeat your messages as often as possible.
- No matter what happens, stay calm & on message.
- If you're doing a taped interview, and you make a mistake, stop and start over.
- If a host asks you a detailed, multi-part question, focus on answering the one question that leads you back to your key messages.
- Avoid sarcasm; it doesn't translate well on TV – or in other media for that matter.

Speaking Tips

- Don't speak too rapidly; in fact, speak more slowly than usual. It will be the perfect speed for TV.
- Use appropriate vocal variation. To avoid sounding monotone, try punching, or emphasizing, one word or phrase in each sentence.

What to Wear

- Grays, blues and browns.
- Do not wear white – it glows on TV; don't wear black – it's too harsh and sucks up all the light.
- Wear pastel shades for shirts/blouses.
- Do not wear patterns, plaids, florals, checks, stripes or dots.
- Avoid big jewelry, especially dangly earrings. Do not wear buttons or slogans – no one will be able to read the slogan, and it will just come across as tacky.
- If you wear glasses most of the time, then wear your glasses, however, you may want to get glare-proof glasses.
- Even if you don't normally perspire, you will on TV because of the hot lights. Makeup will make you look like you're not sweating. Ask the production crew for help if you don't normally wear makeup.