

People, Partnerships, and Communities

The purpose of the People, Partnership, and Communities series is to assist The Conservation Partnership to build capacity by transferring information about social science related topics.

USDA Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

Social Sciences
Team

Looking Good on Television

It's natural to be nervous before a television interview. Here are some helpful tips we've compiled from a variety of sources to make the experience a positive one for you, the reporter, the viewers and your agency/organization.

Get the Details!!

Make sure there is a clear understanding of what the interview is about. You and the interviewer should understand the who, what, where, and when. Who is doing the interview? What is the topic? Where and when will the interview take place? How long is the segment? How much time has been allocated for the interview?

It is important to know about the program, its format, and venue. If you don't know the person who will be interviewing you, or are unfamiliar with the program, watch the news or other appropriate programs before the interview. If the interview is away from the studio, visit the site in advance. If a demonstration is involved, is all equipment in working order? Which is the best location or site for the interview? (Keep the viewer in mind!)

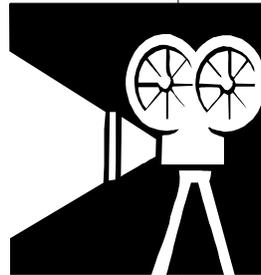
Prepare Key Messages Most reporters ask themselves three questions when a story is proposed. Viewers ask the same questions. These key questions are: so what? who cares?

and what's in it for me or us? Be able to answer those questions from the viewers' point of view.

Offer positive messages or "sparklers". "Sparklers" can be word pictures, startling statistics, or quotations.

Develop Your Message

- ✓ Determine in advance the key messages you want to convey. Be prepared to make them at any time.
- ✓ Attitude is important! TV is all about impressions. Be friendly and conversational.
- ✓ Stick to the point; don't get into hypothetical questions.
- ✓ Once the point is made, don't volunteer additional information.
- ✓ Make a positive point with your first answer.
- ✓ Anticipate and rehearse difficult questions.
- ✓ Answer in short, direct sentences that are no more than 30-45 seconds.
- ✓ Communicate in the language of viewers. Avoid technical language and bureaucratic terms.



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Appropriate Apparel

For Men:

A suit may be appropriate for a talk show. In the field, casual wear is acceptable.

Blue or pastel shirts are best if worn with a blue or gray suit. A deep red or maroon tie does best with a suit. If the interview is on site in a field, a plain dark or blue casual shirt with casual pants is best. Avoid white shirts. White produces glare. If you are wearing a tie, make sure the tip of the tie reaches the top of your belt/ slacks.

For Women:

There are appropriate suggestions for women in the men's section above. In addition, don't wear dangling jewelry, big bows or scarves. Your attire should be bows or scarves. Your attire should be

feminine, but business-like. Skirts should be long enough to cover your knees when you are seated.

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On The Day of The Interview

Conduct is important

To make your television interview a success:

- ◆ arrive early.
- ◆ never say anything in the studio you don't want to hear on television. The recording equipment may not be off.
- ◆ ignore the equipment after you've checked your mike.
- ◆ focus on the interviewer. Maintain eye contact.
- ◆ be friendly, conversational and concise.
- ◆ use the reporter's first name.
- ◆ avoid pauses like "ahhh". Gain thinking time by restating the question or using the reporter's name.

Appearance is key

You don't want to detract from your message or your eyes. Wear solid colors. Avoid distracting patterns of any kind. Hair should be trimmed and neat. Natural gestures help you burn off tension, emphasize key messages and make you look alive and involved.

Avoid Voice Problems

Some foods and beverages can create voice problems. Avoid the following two hours before your interview:

- ◆ stimulants, like caffeine
 - ◆ dairy products
 - ◆ chocolate
 - ◆ ice water, or overly-hot drinks
- Before your interview, water at room temperature is best.

Studio Vs. Stand-up Interview

Studio—

- ◆ Sit in the front of the chair or sofa (leaning back makes you look bored).
- ◆ Lean in toward the interviewer slightly.
- ◆ Keep both heels on the floor to avoid a bouncing knee or crossing your legs.
- ◆ Let your hands rest in your lap, but not together.

Stand-Up—

- ◆ To look comfortable, plant your feet solidly on the ground.
- ◆ Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, to prevent swaying.
- ◆ Button a suit jacket.
- ◆ Bend your elbows and let hands rest loosely at your waist while listening.
- ◆ Add life with gestures while talking.
- ◆ Don't let a mic intimidate you. Never hit or push it away.
- ◆ Maintain eye contact with the reporter.

Social Science is the scientific study of human behavior. It helps us better understand the forces that affect us in social situations. A range of social science topics includes culture, social interaction, communications, groups and organizations, the economy, and social change.