

INTERVIEW TIPS

BEFORE YOU GO

- 1). Have a list of questions and/or a list of subjects to touch on. Don't feel like you need to ask formal questions off a piece of paper. That will make your subject nervous. But do know where you want to take this interview.
- 2). If you're doing a nat sound documentary, remember to have your source set up the story. Ask: "Tell me who you are and what's going on today."

SETTING UP THE SHOT

- 1). Look for the light source. Don't backlight your source with it. Put them so the light falls on 1/3 - 1/2 of their face.
- 2). Aim the camera at the shadowed side of their face. It sounds silly -- just do it.
- 3). Put the camera at eye level. Anything slightly above or below makes the source either look down at the viewer (can be perceived as insulting) or look up at you (awkward). You may break this rule when doing an interview in an odd environmental setting.
- 4). Avoid couches, chairs with wheels or chairs that rock. Put them in a straight-backed chair or make them stand.
- 5). Position your camera so that your source looks across the frame and is usually about 1/3 of the frame. Use rule of thirds and always allow for padding in front of the eyes.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- 1). If you have a tripod, set up your camera and flip the video screen so you can sit on the left of the camera but still see the shot. Don't stay behind the camera if possible -- it makes your source nervous. You're also setting up what somebody once called "the reporter sandwich." From left to right, it should be source-reporter-camera. This also ensures that your source is looking near the camera, but not directly at it.
- 2). Ask open-ended questions. Connect with the source with your eyes and by nodding your head. Do not talk. Do not laugh. Do not interrupt.
- 3). Between questions, feel free to recompose your angle. You may to a super-tight closeup or do a more medium shot. Only recompose when your source is waiting for the next question.
- 4). Don't be afraid to re-ask questions. If your source stumbles, or goes on a tangent, just re-ask. If they start to say things like, "Like I said, it was fun..." stop them, tell them you need them to be more specific because the people watching the tape won't know what they said before.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- 1). You probably need b-roll of this person. If you have a wireless mic, keep them mic'd and then just follow them around. If you don't, just follow them for a bit. Collect an array of shots -- wide, medium, tight -- of them doing something in their environment. If you're establishing a character, you will need lots of these shots.
- 2). Wait for the storytelling moment. You want to see this person in their environment, interacting with others. Wait for it. Do not leave until you get some nat sound/b-roll like this -- it will cut up your interview and give you a lot more flexibility in the editing room.