

Tips for Filming Interviews

If you're going to be doing a project that will involve shooting an interview, here are a few tips for preparing and setting up. Some notes below build on information present in the *Basic Video Production* documentation, so we encourage you to review that as well.

Research & Planning

If you have an idea of whom you are going to interview, make sure that you start a dialogue with your guest before they sit down for the interview. You can also use this correspondence to let them know about your project, what direction you plan on going in, and a general outline of your questions. Getting a pre-interview communication going with your guest will help you with planning for the interview and give you an idea of how they will potentially answer your questions. You do not have to show them the questions, but it's something to consider if they ask.

Working with your Equipment

You always want to spend a little time with the equipment before you start your interview, especially if you are unfamiliar with it.

The Camera

With your camera, look at things like quality in low light as this will help you better determine where you'll need to hold the interview and if you'll need more lighting. If you're using a camera that auto adjusts to the light, be cautious when filming in or near natural light. Natural light can cause fluctuations in the lighting levels (ie: clouds moving overhead) that cause the image to lighten or darken in response. Also, always avoid placing your subject in front of a window during the day, as the strong back light can cause the subject to be in shadow.

Tripod

Make sure to use a tripod. Having a tripod will keep your shot steady which is less distracting for the audience. It's also helpful if you happen to end up doing the interview alone. If you can't use a tripod because of space issues, get creative. Stack up some books or other objects. If you have to hold the camera for the entire interview, get comfortable and find a way to position your arms; so they do not get too tired and shake.

Microphone

There may be instances when the microphone on the camera is not enough to capture the clear audio you want. In these cases, you can use a dedicated audio device to capture sound and lay it over the video in post-production editing. If you plan on doing this, you will want to make some sound and corresponding gesture while on video (ie: hand clapping), possibly even say the clip number.

The sound acts as your cue for where to sync and when you cut off your camera, make sure to cut off your microphone to help keep track of which video clip goes with which audio clip. You can learn more about audio production in our *basic audio production* document.

Setting up for the Interview

When planning for your interview, not only do you want to have good questions, but with a video interview you will also want to think about the actual shot. Where will you film? What kind of shot do you want to set up? Will there just be the guest in the frame, or will you have the interviewer in the shot as well? How will you light your interview?

Location

If you're going for a sit-down style interview, you'll want first to find a place that is quiet. Working in a quiet location will give you less hassle when it comes to the audio noise coming from the surrounding environment.

You will also want to make sure you pay attention to whether or not you have permission to film in the space. You can look online beforehand to see if there is a camera policy. If there isn't one, contact someone directly.

Lighting

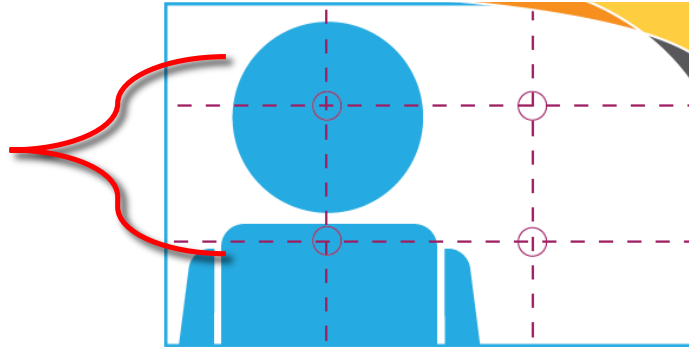
Think about your equipment and your location when dealing with your lighting. Look at your space to determine if there are windows, what the over-head lighting looks like, etc. If you don't have a lighting setup, use the environment's lighting situation to your advantage. Use light from a window or lamps to light your subject. But remember; don't place your subject in front of a strong light source such as a window.

Shot Composition

Shot composition looks at how you frame your guest in the video. With interviews, you will want to pay attention to shot size and shot angle. Often for interviews, you will see a medium shot used with a eye-level angle. If you go with a wide shot, the interview will feel more casual, while a close up shot will feel more dramatic. Additionally, use an angle that is eye-level with the guest, as generally, you want to keep the audience's perception neutral.

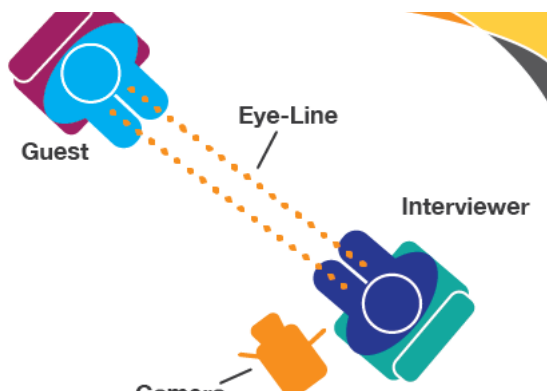
Another thing you will want to keep in mind is the Rule of Thirds. The Rule of Thirds is a grid system that can be used to create a compositionally pleasing image. When setting up an interview shot, it's often feels natural to place your guest in the center of the shot. Instead of doing this, you'll want to place your guest on one of the vertical lines that sections the frame into thirds. See *next page for diagram*.

The dash lines mark your rule of thirds grid. Line your guest up along the line. You can always go with either the left side or the right side.



In this diagram, it's a medium shot at an eye-level angle.

When working with the composition of your interview, think about the guest's eye-line or where they are looking during the interview. Unless you're working purposefully, you want to avoid having the guest look directly into the camera. A good rule of thumb is that if your guest is on the right side of the frame, have them looking left and vice versa. Keep in mind that often people will look at the person who is asking the question, so make sure to position your interviewer near the camera. Place them on the right side of the camera if you need the guest to look right and vice versa. Again, you can get a more detailed explanation of shot composition by viewing *Basic Video Production* documentation.



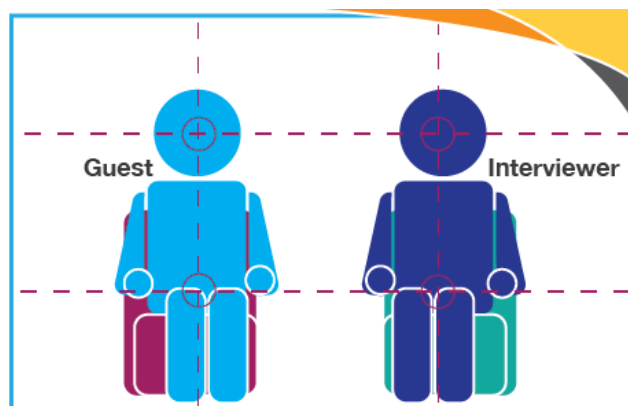
An overhead shot of the above diagram. Since the guest is on the left side of the frame in the shot, they are looking off to the right.

Special Note – Having the interviewer in the shot.

If you want to set up an interview where both the interviewer and guest are in the shot, you have a lot of options. If you only have one camera, though, the easiest set up is to have a wide shot that has both the interviewer and guest in the frame, placing the camera between them.



An overhead diagram of a two person set up.



For this set-up, a wide shot with an eye-level angle. Notice that both the guest and the interviewer are lined up with the rule of thirds.