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Camera Instructions
GOOD, BETTER, BEST

Here are some general guidelines for camera use. Any recording will do but there are some ways to improve your interview for those who may be watching in the future.

-Find a place where there are a limited number of distractions.

GOOD: Set-up in a room with a few people watching. Try to keep them out of the view of the person you are interviewing to avoid distractions. Turn down any TVs or radios, and turn off the ringer on any phones.

BEST: Find a room where the interview can be conducted one-on-one with no distractions. Turn off any TVs, radios, and turn off the ringer on any phones.

-Have the person face you.

GOOD: The person speaks to you or looks into the camera.

BEST: Have the person face you instead of looking directly into the camera. This may make the person feel more relaxed and is the accepted interview style.

-Put the camera in a convenient place

GOOD: Hold the camera and use the fold out monitor if your camera has one. Your arms may get tired but you will get the interview on tape.

BETTER: Put the camera on a table and use the fold out monitor if your camera has one to see if the picture looks good. This will make the picture steadier and your arms won't get tired.

BEST: Put the camera on a tripod and use the fold out monitor if your camera has one. The shot will be steady and your arms won't get tired.

-Avoid too much zooming as it can be distracting to your interview subject's story.

GOOD: Minimal amounts of zooming to change the shot.

BETTER: Little or no zooming.

BEST: Camera steady on the tripod with no zooming.

-Have the interview subject sit in a comfortable chair.

GOOD: The chair is against the wall.

BETTER: The chair is pulled 18 inches or more from the wall.

BEST: Place the interview subject in a chair that is pulled several feet away from the wall. This will prevent the optical illusion of the person disappearing into the wall.

-Put the person against a neutral background. NO WHITE WALLS!

GOOD: Put the person in front of a brightly colored wall. Many cameras will make it appear your interview subject is in the dark. You can use your camera's fold-out monitor, if it has one, to see if the interview subject is brighter than the wall.

BETTER: Put the person in front of a dark or neutral colored wall. You can use your camera's fold-out monitor, if it has one, to see if the interview subject is brighter than the wall.

BEST: Put the person in front of a dark colored wall. You can use your camera's fold-out monitor, if it has one, to see if this is a problem.

-Put the interview subject so you can see them in your camera's monitor.

GOOD: The interview subject is not too far away from the camera, in the picture and in focus. Try to avoid placing the interview subject in the exact center of the screen.

BETTER: The interview subject is 6' away from the camera, in the picture, and in focus.

BEST: The interview subject is 6' or less from the camera, the picture shows the person from the middle of their chest to the top of their head, and there is a small space between the top of their head and the top of the screen. Place the person so there is space between their nose and the edge of the screen. This technique makes the viewer "feel" like the person you are interviewing is talking to someone.

-Use the best lighting available.

GOOD: (two alternatives)

-#1 Use the lights in the room that are in front of the interview subject like table lamps or overhead lights. Use your camera's fold-out monitor, if it has one, to see if the interview subject is brighter than the wall. If the interview subject has glasses then try not to have them face directly towards the lights because there may be too much glare off their lenses. One way to avoid most of the glare is have the interview subject turn and face you. You can use your camera's fold-out monitor, if it has one, to see if this will work.

-#2 Use a window as a light source. If you have the window behind both you and the camera then the light will fall directly on to the interview subject. If the interview subject has glasses then try not to have them face directly into the window because there may be too much glare off their lenses. One way to avoid most of the glare is have the interview subject turn and face you. You can use your camera's fold-out monitor, if it has one, to see if this will work.

BEST: Use television-style 3-point lighting if available. A key-light, a fill-light, and a back-light will make the subject look nice without distracting the viewer from the story.

-Use a microphone

GOOD: Use the microphone on the camera. This is where other sounds in the room can make the sound on the tape unusable by future viewers but it may be all you have available at the time.

BETTER: Use a hand-held microphone on a stand placed within 18" of the interview subject.

BEST: Use a lapel microphone that can be clipped on to the interview subject's clothing. The microphone should be clipped a maximum of 12" from the interview subject's mouth.