

Man On The Street Interview Tips

Being an interviewer is a hard job... but hey, it's easier than running the camera and conducting an interview at the same time! Since there are two of us, I'll run the camera and you can conduct the interview. Here are a few tips to help you do a great job.

WHERE TO STAND

This is probably the hardest thing to do right off the bat. Unless you are shooting a training video or making an appeal directly to the viewer, you don't want to have the interviewee looking into camera. It is equally distracting to have the interviewee staring off to the far distant side at a person you can't see. You want the person you're interviewing to look toward the camera lens, but slightly to the side. How do we achieve this? The key is for you, the interviewer, to stand next to the camera, to the left or right of the lens. How do you know you're in the right place? If it feels awkward, it's probably right: if you're in the right place, you're almost always violating your own personal space and the camera operator's personal space.

REPEAT THE QUESTION

Always try to have the subject repeat the question. Not the exact question, but ask them to rephrase the question you asked them while also answering them. For instance, Q: "Where are you from?" A: "I'm from a town called Gainesville," instead of "Gainesville." In the video we won't hear your question; we don't want to hear your question. But you are the gatekeeper for their answers – it's your job to reinforce that they keep doing this. Sometimes interviewees are like goldfish and won't remember this for longer than two minutes... so try to kindly remind them. Over and over if necessary.

WHAT'S HER NAME?

When your video makes it to the editing room, it will save a lot of time in the editing process if you, the interviewer, get your subject to tell us their names on camera before we start asking the actual interview questions. This helps me find the correct person when editing and saves me sending you dozens of images that you have to pass around the office playing "I think he is the Mayor of Alexandria." Saves you time, saves me time, but is extremely easy to forget. Everyone should state their name when we start recording.

ALWAYS CHECK TO SEE IF THE CAMERA OPERATOR IS READY

Most cameras have half a dozen settings that need to be in place each time we start recording for each person. There is focus, and audio, and light and well... lots of others. If we start an interview before the camera operator has given the go-ahead, we'll have to throw out the footage of the first question, because the camera is focused on a dog in the background... instead of our subject.