

Media Training Handout: “Becoming a Public Intellectual”

What makes a good media expert?

- Information and explanation
- Expertise
- Stories and examples
- Opinions
- Personality – smile!
- Relaxed, open body language
- Confidence
- Passion and energy
- Clarity
- Jargon free language
- Humour (when appropriate)

Style and Delivery

Before you do any interview, take time to focus on how you want to be, not just what you want to say. **This can transform the impact of your message.**

▪ **Nerves**

Recognise that nerves are natural and anticipate them. Adrenaline prepares you for a good performance, but you need to channel it and not let your nerves get the better of you.

- BREATHE – key to controlling nerves, your voice, your posture.
- Be Prepared: *The more uncertain you are, the more nervous you will be.*
- RELAX – you will shine!!

• **Body language and voice**

Don't be afraid to move and to use your voice. Body language and intonation can add meaning, mood, passion. Don't forget to smile.

• **MORE ENERGY!!**

Boost your energy for the camera/microphone – this will not undermine your authority and will appear natural on the screen.

• **Be natural**

Imagine you're trying to get your message across to a friend.

• **Beware verbal and physical tics**

Repetitious movements or words will distract the audience's attention.

Preparation

Good preparation can reduce your nerves and increase the likelihood of avoiding errors.

- **Find out the facts**

Find out as much as you can about the interview: what is the subject and is this something you want to speak about? Are you the sole guest or part of a panel? Is there a “news peg” for the interview – is it likely to be broadened out? How long is the interview?

- **Who’s your audience?**

This will affect your use of language (eg jargon) and the style of your answers.

- **Key Messages**

Depending on the duration, you may only have time to make a few key points. What are they and in what priority? Remember it is better to make a couple of points well than 5 or 6 badly where you confuse the audience. It’s not about showing off what you know!

- **Specific examples/anecdotes**

Will bring your interview to life. There’s nothing more boring than generalisations. Have some stories and examples ready to use.

- **Answer duration**

Remember it’s a conversation. Your answers should be around 15- 30 seconds. Be concise but not monosyllabic.

- **Pause**

If you are caught off guard or “dry up”, just pause for a moment to collect yourself and continue. If you can maintain eye contact and not look flustered, you’ll seem intelligent and measured!

Radio and TV Studio Etiquette

Radio:

Don't tap the table or touch the microphone

Don't sway back and forth or from side to side in front of the microphone – you will go “off mic”

Project your energy and body language through your voice

It may help to think you are talking to one person

TV:

Check with person who contacts you for advice about dress code and remember it will be hot under lights.

Sit in a way that makes you feel comfortable, hands loosely on your lap or resting on chair arm if there is one

Unless specifically advised otherwise, always look at your interviewer and not the camera

Both:

Don't wear “noisy jewellery”

Your interviewer may be receiving talkback and appear distracted – they are not being rude. Just keep going!

Writing for Broadcast

- Write as you speak
- Conflate words (I'm, It's, You're etc)
- Keep it simple - one idea per sentence and avoiding long words. Keep sentences short
- Give examples and anecdotes to add interest
- Beware statistics – keep them simple. Round up/down figures unless essential to be accurate
- Beware lists – can be tedious to listen to – groups of 3 maximum
- When timing your script a rule of thumb is 3 words a second
- Always practise by reading aloud what you've written to make sure it makes sense.