

Unit 6

Interview Skills



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Visual 6.1

Unit Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe what types of impressions specific body language might convey during an interview
- Identify elements of an interview the PIO should consider ahead of time
- Identify steps a PIO needs to take to prepare for and conduct a news interview
- Demonstrate effective techniques for on-camera interviews



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Visual 6.2

The Basics

Objective

Why are you communicating?

Educate?
Persuade?
Call to action?

Audience

Who are you trying to reach?

What do they already know?
What is their perception?

Message

What will you say?
How will you say it?

What words and medium?



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Visual 6.3

Determining the Objective

When a reporter asks for an interview, who determines the objective?



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Visual 6.4

Understanding the Audience

Before you reach your target audience, you first need to reach the news media.

Does the reporter:

- Understand your department or program?
- Have a track record (good or bad)?
- Have a bias or “agenda”?

Does the target audience:

- Have an opinion of your department?
- Understand the topic?
- Have perceptions to address?



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Visual 6.5

Developing the Message

**Given the audience,
what will you say to
achieve your objective?**

**Given the medium,
how will you convey
the message?**



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Visual 6.6

Preparing for the Interview

1. Understand the request and anticipate questions
2. Develop talking points that convey your message
3. Practice or prep the spokesperson
4. Finally: update your facts!



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Visual 6.7

In the Real World . . .

- Time after time, after- action reports have pointed to lack of “size-up” as a reason for a tragedy on an emergency scene
- Lack of a size-up before an interview can have nearly as tragic a result



“Your Actions Speak So Loudly . . .

. . . I can not hear what you are saying.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson



1



2



3



4



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Nonverbal Communication Tips

Pay attention to:

- Eye contact
- Voice
- Expression
- Body position
- Gestures
- Movement
- Attire



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Visual 6.10

“Owning” the Interview

Techniques that help the PIO better manage the interview interaction include:

- Bridging
- Paraphrasing
- Alternatives to “No Comment”
- Reversing a negative



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Visual 6.11

Transitional Phrases or “Bridging”

- “What is most important is”
- “What we should focus on is”
- “What the public should know is”
- “The point (or goal) is”
- “I don’t know, but what I can tell you is...”



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Visual 6.12

Paraphrasing

- **Question:** “What is your goal with this new initiative?”
- **Answers:**
 - “Our goal with this new initiative is...”
 - “What we want to accomplish with this new initiative is...”



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Alternatives to “No Comment”

1. “The matter is under investigation and that information is not available at this time.”
2. “We will provide updates as more information becomes available.”
3. “Let me put you in contact with someone who is better able to answer that question.”
4. “Those details are covered by the Privacy Act and I cannot discuss them, but I can give you this general information...”



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Visual 6.14

Reversing a Negative

- **Question:** “Your efforts to reduce our crime rate have been ineffective; how can you say we are a safer community today?”
- **WRONG Answer:** “Our efforts are not ineffective because...”
- **BETTER Answers:**
 - “We are a safer community today because...”
 - “Our efforts have been very effective in this way...”



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Hostile Interviews

Hostile interviewers are those who:

- Interrupt your answers
- Shoot rapid-fire questions
- Demand an answer
- Put words in your mouth
- Try to create the answer they want by misquoting you



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Mental Checklist

- Know what you want to say
- Know what you DON'T want to talk about
- Think about the audience and the medium
- Gather your information (quick issue update)
- Practice sound bites
- Take a deep breath and relax



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What Can You Do Now?

In this unit, we discussed:

- Body language that can convey good or bad impressions during an interview
- Techniques to improve on-camera interviews
- Journalistic style used for news releases



What can you do now to continue developing your capabilities in these areas?



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Activity 6.1: On-Camera Interviews

Purpose: To practice on-camera performance

Instructions:

- Write talking points on a subject you are familiar with, or use the information in your Student Manual
- Practice delivery with a partner
- Be ready to give a television interview
- Your instructor will act as the reporter and will provide feedback on your performance



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Unit Summary

In this unit, we discussed:

- Preparing for an on-camera interview during an incident
- The impression that different body language makes
- Elements of an interview the PIO should consider ahead of time



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