

How to Interview

AV PRODUCTION GIL Garcia



The Interviewee

- A good interview starts with the choice of your subject. Ideally the person you interview is the right stakeholder with appropriate experience or investment in the topic. It helps if he or she has some “stage presence” and is comfortable on camera. Give your interviewee a general sense of what you want to discuss, but unless you want a rehearsed or canned answer, try to avoid giving the questions ahead of time. Spontaneous answers – straight from the heart -- always sound more genuine.



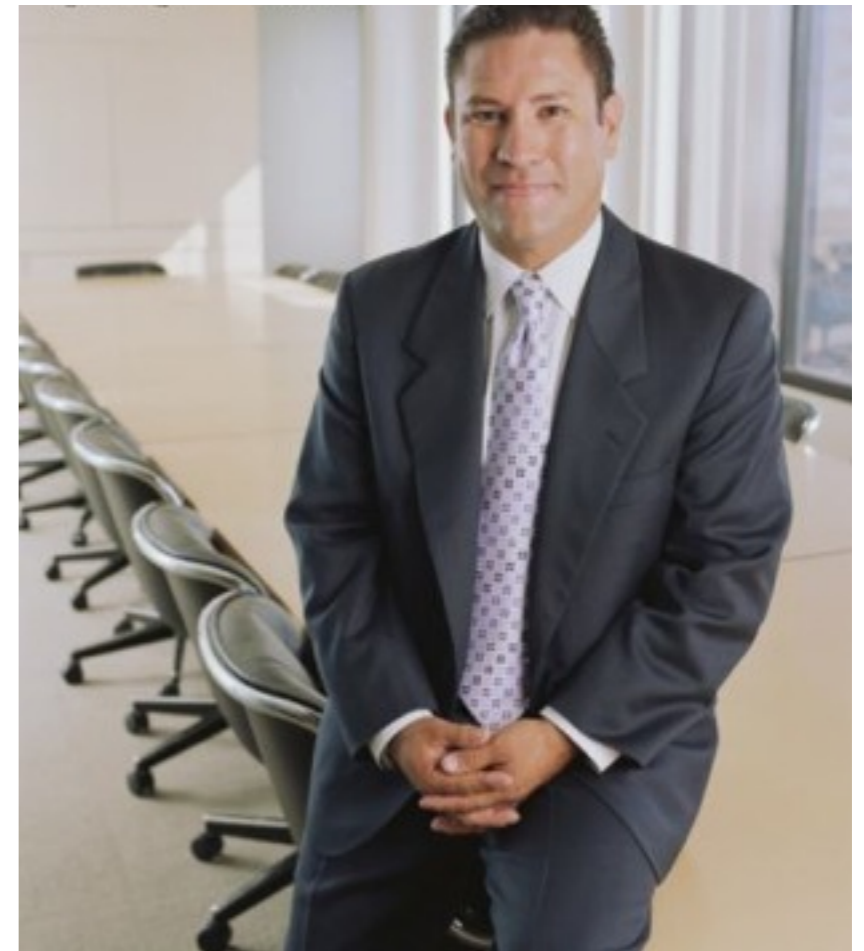
The Environment/Relative Background

- Interview locations and backgrounds help set the stage, provide context, and reinforce credibility. You've seen lawyers interviewed in front of law books and doctors near credentials. Interview a train conductor on or near a train. Interview a musical conductor on stage or out in front of the concert hall. You can use an office to show where someone works, but dress it up to make the environment more interesting.



The Environment/ Relative Background

- Remove messy piles of paper (unless the story is about messes or how to organize, etc.) Move plants and furniture around to create suitable space for your equipment and to manage the foreground and background. Maybe have an executive sit on the front edge of a conference table rather than shoot him at his desk. Be creative when you select interview locations.
- Shoot the football coach in front of the trophy case, on the football field, but not in his office.



Subject and Camera Placement

- Where you place the camera in relation to your subject and background has a profound effect on the look of your interview. Nothing spells amateur more than a perfectly centered head in front of a generic background. To determine the best screen placement for your interviewee, use the rule of thirds.



Subject and Camera Placement

- Consider camera height relative to the subject's sightline. You can increase or decrease perceived authority by how high or low you set the camera. When a camera aims down on the subject, he or she appears subservient. A lower camera looking up to an interviewee, gives greater perceived authority and credibility. Keep the camera close to eye level and relatively neutral.



Subject and Camera Placement

- When there's room, place your subject far enough in front of the background to throw the background slightly out of focus. In addition to keeping shadows off your background from the lighting used on the subject, this helps draw more attention to your subject rather than his or her surroundings.



INTERVIEWER PLACEMENT (cross axis)

- Many people are not comfortable talking to a camera. **Save them the discomfort and get a better interview by having them focus on answering your questions as if the two of you are just having a conversation rather than how they are supposed to look into the lens, etc.** If you are the interviewer, you should try your best to sit or stand next to the camera with your eyes in line with the center of the lens.



ADD APPROPRIATE MOVEMENT

- No rule says you must restrict an interview to one place. You can move and talk with someone on a horse, bike, racing car, escalator, or whatever. Move the background – Again, pertinent to the topic, show some action behind the interviewee unless it might become too distracting. Examples: skater near a busy skate park, zookeeper near active animals, traffic official near a busy street, etc.



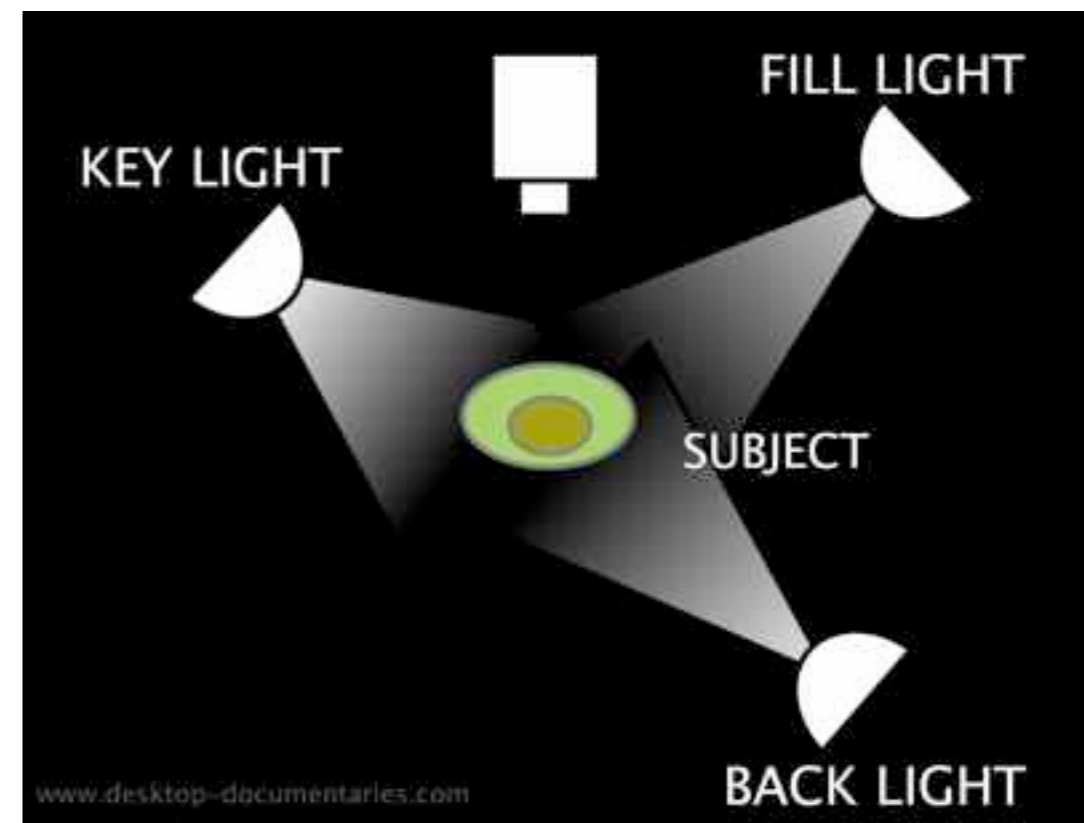
Lighting

- Never shoot a backlit subject, (unless you don't want to reveal their identity)
- Video cameras requires sufficient light to record a decent picture, so you will always have a better image when you add and manage lighting



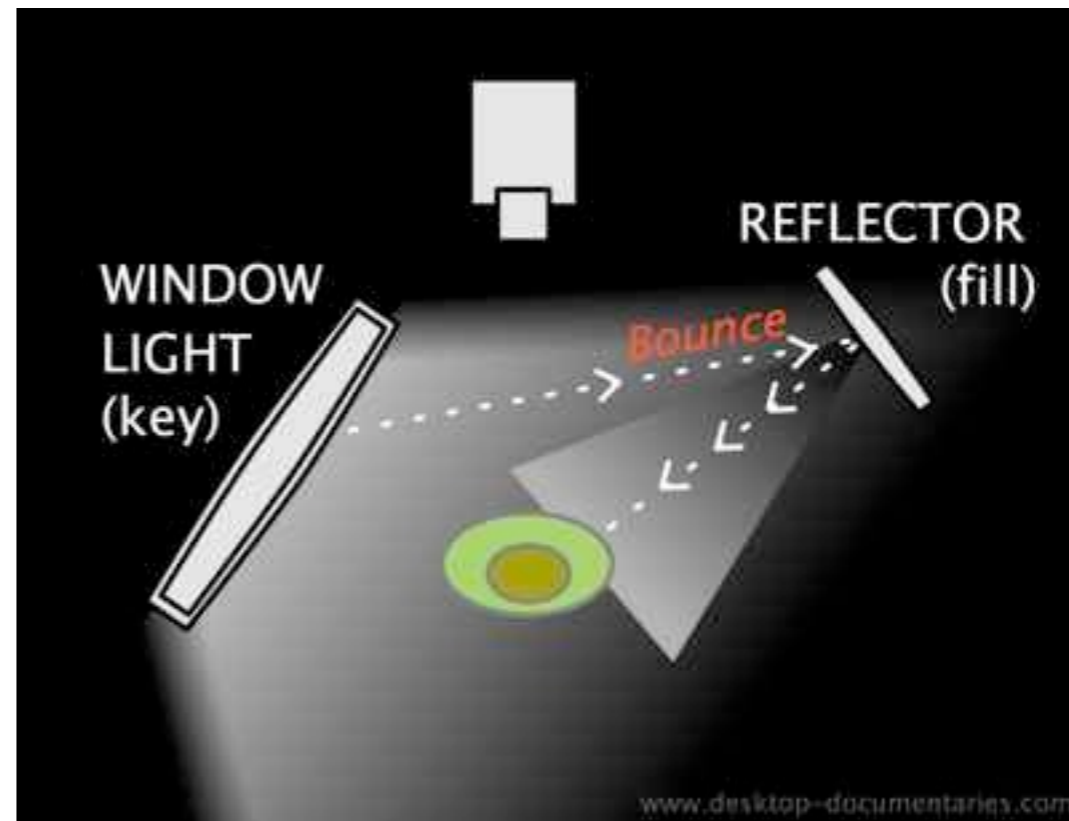
Lighting

- With basic 3-point lighting you place a key light to one side of the camera. Normally the key light is on the side where the subject is looking. A fill light on the other side will counter some of the shadowing created by the key light. The backlight should create a rim effect around the head and shoulder of the subject to provide separation from the background.



Lighting

- Or you can use the sun and a reflector



Lighting

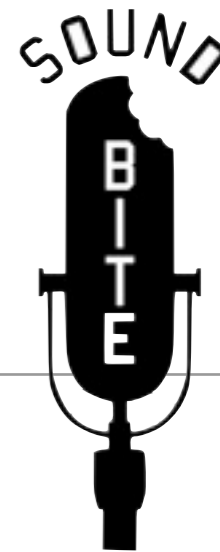


Image A is the final result of all three lights: key light (B), fill light (C) and rim or backlight (D). Additionally, we have a hidden fourth light throwing light onto our background.

Audio



- On the fly, newscasters may use a handheld microphone stuck in the face of someone, but ideally a small lavalier mic works best for most interviews. As a safety back up, record the other channel with a shotgun mic either on the camera, mounted or boomed toward the subject. Always have someone monitor the audio with headphones for technical quality and noise while you are setting up and during production.



COACH FOR OPTIMAL SOUNDBITES

- **Soundbite = a short phrase or sentence that deftly captures the essence of what the speaker is trying to say.**
“a minimum of sound to a maximum of sense” -mark twain
- To get brief, complete, stand-alone answers, you will likely need to coach your interviewees.
- “Since I won’t be in the interview, we need your answers to be self-contained. Don’t just repeat it but blend it into your answers. For example – If I ask “what color is the sky?”; You might say, “The sky is blue.” If you forget to ask for this, you’ll have a lot more trouble when it comes time to edit the interview during post-production. Some people talk in continuous compound sentences. They use “and,” “but”, and “so” and never come to a clean end of a thought before connecting to the next one

GET WHAT YOU NEED

- Of course, as a good interviewer, you will have all your questions prepared ahead of time. But you need to be in the moment and spontaneous. Ask follow-up questions. As the interviewer, it is your job to get good useable answers. Redirect or re-phrase a question to get a different answer if necessary. Ask for a clean start if the interviewee begins an answer with “um” or anything else that might prevent your video editor from finding a good place to cut. Reframe the camera every once in a while to vary the look of the answers. You may occasionally need to cut from part of one answer to part of another using b-roll to hide a jump-cut.



Wrap Up

- Ask if there is anything else they would like to add and give them an opportunity to do so. Tell them when and if they might be able to see the finished results. You might also ask if they would be okay with you coming back in case you missed something important. Make sure you **THANK THEM** for their time and thoughts. Conduct every interview with courtesy and compassion. You want something from them – treat them with respect.



Questions before the Quiz?

- Take out a sheet of paper and a pen