

Check list: On camera

Clearly structured content, well-considered messages and the right language are the keys to success in front of the camera. However, it is estimated that our impression of an on-camera appearance is determined primarily (75%) by external factors. That's why we have put together a checklist to help you avoid mistakes and optimise your performance.

Fundamentals

- Good preparation helps prevent stress. Always take the time to consider your objective, who you're speaking to and how you want to appear.
- Do not learn texts by heart (with the exception of core messages). Cue cards are useful, but most of what you say should be spontaneous in order to sound authentic.
- Never do a recording on your own. Take someone with you to supervise the shoot, and choose someone who will give you an honest opinion.

Clothing/appearance

- Wear appropriate clothing that you feel comfortable in and which fits well.
- Opt for simple clothing. If possible, avoid strong colours (red makes you look pale), pure black and dazzling white; small patterns create a shimmer (moiré effect).
- Bring alternative clothing with you where possible (jacket, shirt).
- Striking accessories or ties are often distracting; a scarf shortens your neck.
- Where several people are involved in the shoot, everyone should agree on complementary clothing (style, colours).
- Avoid anything that sparkles (buttons, jewellery, pins). Glasses can be distracting, but if you have to wear them, choose an anti-reflective pair if possible.
- Hair should be freshly washed, as it can often look greasy on camera. Be sparing with gel and hair wax. Men should be as freshly shaved as possible.
- Always powder your face (both women and men). It's generally better to wear slightly more make-up than normal. ITS MMS can organise a make-up artist for you if necessary (subject to a charge).
- Your companion should check your clothing and appearance before you go on camera (no hair or dandruff on clothes, shiny face, etc.)

On site

- Check that your shooting location is appropriate to the topic. On request, ITS MMS can provide you with a list of suitable interview locations at ETH.
- Always take a good look around. What is in the background of your shoot? Avoid the classic bookshelf, as well as windows and rooms with distracting detail.
- Choose a location away from disruptive background noise (passers-by, traffic, etc.)
- Check that the camera is set at eye-level. People look taller or shorter when filmed from above or below.
- Choose a setting in which you feel comfortable (no direct sunlight, not too windy, cold, etc.)
- Your companion should keep an eye on what's going on behind you during the shoot and intervene if necessary.
- Take a bottle of non-sparkling water with you to avoid a dry mouth; avoid coffee beforehand and do not eat anything sweet in the hour before the shoot.

During the shoot

- Posture: Stand or sit still and find a comfortable position. Create a degree of tension in your body, but avoid looking strained. Sitting with both feet flat on the ground lends itself to an upright posture; standing with feet hip-width apart creates a stable base. Do not cross your arms.
- Use appropriate gestures: If you like to “talk with your hands”, you can do this on camera, but do so in a controlled manner and keep your hands below your chin. Avoid wild gestures.
- Facial expression: Be natural, engaged and pleasant. Adapt your facial expression to the situation – smiling makes you seem friendly!
- When you are listening to a question, maintain a neutral, friendly expression. Avoid nodding to show that you have understood the question; the audience could mistake this for a sign of agreement.
- Line of sight: Look directly at the person to whom you're speaking. Try to focus, without staring or looking around. Other lines of sight should be discussed with the camera crew.
- Stay calm: Inhaling and exhaling deeply before you speak is helpful; breathe steadily while you are speaking.
- Voice: Enunciate clearly. Do not speak too fast or too monotonously. You can convey positive emotions in your voice if appropriate for the situation.
- Know your own tics (rubbing your eyes, puckering your lips, holding your head to one side, fidgeting, etc.) and try to avoid them as much as possible.

- Short, clear sentences with short pauses are easier to understand and make post-production/editing easier.
- Your companion should pay attention to these things and interrupt the shoot if they notice anything.

Organisation

- If you are working with an external provider, watch the recordings and arrange to give your approval.
- Ask for an original file of the recording if possible; this can be archived at ITS MMS.
- Contact ITS MMS for authorisation forms to ensure proper legal handling of your recordings.
- With the media, it's unusual to see recordings again before they're broadcast – so it's a case of mutual trust.

ETH video studio

(Contact: Martin Wieser, ITS MMS, wiesemar@id.ethz.ch)

- The studio offers various backgrounds (corporate design, black/white with different colour lighting); try out an appropriate background before the shoot.
- Various props are available for the interview set (chairs, etc.)
- A teleprompter is available so you can read a text and look into the camera at the same time; this must be tested in advance.
- For green-screen shoots, discuss the set-up and clothing with the studio management in advance.