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**MEDIA SKILLS WORKSHOP**

SECTION 1:

# **MEDIA INTRODUCTION**

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## **OVERVIEW: SECTION 1**

- ▶ **Tactics: Bridging, Hooking, Flagging, Touch and Go**
- ▶ **Ten tips**
- ▶ **DOs and DON'Ts**
- ▶ **General Interview Tips - Before, During, and After**
- ▶ **Final Thoughts**

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## **THE ART OF BRIDGING**

- ▶ A bridging statement is simply a transition from one topic (based on a reporter's question) to a subject you want to talk about (your message).
- ▶ You should answer the question as briefly as possible, and then bridge to your message. Sometimes you are introducing your message for the first time, while other times you are reinforcing it.

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## BRIDGING EXAMPLES

- ▶ Here are some examples of bridging statements that will effectively help you stay on message:
  - ▶ *The fact is...*
  - ▶ *Let me re-emphasize what I said earlier about...*
  - ▶ *The other way to view the question is...*
  - ▶ *What I recommend people pay attention to is...*

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## BRIDGING TIPS

- ▶ The first question rule: Take Control
- ▶ You can begin your answer with a “bridge” such as:
  - *That’s a great question. Let’s take a step back and look at some important information. I’d like to give you some history....*
  - Then deliver your message

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## BRIDGING TIPS CONT'D

- ▶ NEVER ANSWER A HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION!
- ▶ A journalist might try to get an interesting story by leading you into a “what if” scenario. Never speculate. Instead, bridge to one of your core messages with:
  - *That’s too hypothetical at this point, but....*
  - *I don’t want to speculate on that, but what I think you’re trying to get at is....*

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## INTERVIEWS GONE ASTRAY

- ▶ Sometimes you need to abruptly change the direction of the interview. Perhaps the reporter has wandered into a different direction, or is touching on a controversial issue, and you want to get back on message.
- ▶ Here are some bridging statements you can use:
  - *The question your public wants answered is...*
  - *The real issue here is...*

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## THE HOOK

- ▶ The hook is a technique that gets the interviewer to follow-up on your first point allowing you to get a second point in.
- ▶ For example, you can say, *“There are two very important considerations that must be taken into account before we can support this proposed health care policy. The first is ...”* then expand on that point.
- ▶ The interview will seem incomplete if the reporter doesn't follow-up with, *“and the second point?”* This is a good way to ensure that both your points get air time.

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## FLAGGING

- ▶ Flagging alerts the reporter to what you consider most important. It's a good way to emphasize the key point or points you want the reporter to remember.
- ▶ Flagging is simply giving the reporter a verbal clue about what is important:
  - *What your audience needs to know is...*
  - *The most important thing is...*
  - *The story no one is telling is...*
  - *The only way is...*
  - *Anyone who cares about {this issue} should know that....*
  - *The critical point is...*
  - *If there's one point viewers need to understand...*

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## **TOUCH AND GO**

- ▶ **TOUCH AND GO:** You can 'touch' on something that helps set the context, pointing at your frame or referencing the discussion and then 'go' to your talking points
  - In the post 9-11 world....
  - Just like Watergate....
  - In the alt-right era....

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## TEN TIPS

1. Use simple, direct answers
2. Repeat messages
3. Pause
4. Don't over answer: make your point, then stop talking
5. Avoid jargon
6. Listen, don't interrupt (unless a debate format)
7. Stay in your zone of expertise
8. Don't get angry
9. Never say "off the record" or "no comment"
10. Don't say it if you don't want to see it

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## **DOs AND DON'Ts**

- ▶ Never lie to a reporter
- ▶ Respect reporters' professionalism
- ▶ Never wing it
- ▶ Translate for real people
- ▶ Speak in sound bites
- ▶ Return reporters' calls
- ▶ Meet reporters' deadlines
- ▶ Use words to create an image or paint a picture of your story
- ▶ Excessive, distracting hand gestures
- ▶ Tapping a foot or pen, swaying or jiggling your body
- ▶ Pause words (um, uh, like)
- ▶ Reiterating the opposition's statements
- ▶ Letting a hostile question or comment anger or fluster you

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## GENERAL INTERVIEW TIPS: BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- ▶ Develop your messages and translate into shorter sound bites
- ▶ Control the frame
- ▶ Think about multiple angles and hooks
- ▶ Know your talking points and be well practiced; practice in front of the mirror, in front of your friends and if possible even in front of a camera
- ▶ Ask the reporter a series of questions before they ask you any!
  - *Find out what kind of a story the outlet is doing (how long, what angle, etc)*
  - *What topics will be discussed in the interview?*
  - *Who else is being interviewed?*
  - *What's the interview format?*
  - *When will it air?*
  - *Where will it appear (and can you leverage that for more)?*

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## **GENERAL INTERVIEW TIPS: BEFORE THE INTERVIEW CONT'D**

- ▶ Consider getting the opinion of someone outside your immediate circle about the clarity of your message. Does it make sense to them? What other details are important?
- ▶ Know your audience and know the outlets (watch the show, research the reporter's past work, understand who reads/watches/listens and why)
- ▶ Think about building relationships with the reporter and the outlet
- ▶ Know deadlines & communication preferences & honor them
- ▶ Know the interview format and prepare yourself for the specific type of interview

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## **GENERAL INTERVIEW TIPS: BEFORE THE INTERVIEW CONT'D**

- ▶ Prepare for distractions and interruptions
- ▶ Think through what questions you can expect to be asked, especially the 'harsh' or 'bad' questions you can anticipate, prepare for the 'worst'
- ▶ Think about what 'the opposition' will say
- ▶ Don't be intimidated, remember, YOU hold the power in this situation

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## **GENERAL INTERVIEW TIPS: BEFORE THE INTERVIEW CONT'D**

- ▶ Warm up to make your voice heard!
- ▶ Shake your body to loosen it up and bring your energy present
- ▶ Make noises to wake up your vocal chords, jaws, tongue and lips
- ▶ Breathe deeply. Expand your stomach on the inhale and tighten on the exhale
- ▶ Hold yourself in good posture
- ▶ Have fun and practice, practice, practice
- ▶ Practice phrases and tongue twisters

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## **GENERAL INTERVIEW TIPS: DURING THE INTERVIEW**

- ▶ Remember you have something important to say. Build up your self-confidence and project confidence in the interview!
- ▶ Remember that this is YOUR interview, the reporter needs you for the story!
- ▶ There is no such thing as 'off the record' and no such thing as 'off camera' remarks!
- ▶ Avoid 'No Comment'
- ▶ It is ok not to know the answer, but refer them to someone who does, and then tell them what you want them to know (your talking points!)

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## **GENERAL INTERVIEW TIPS: DURING THE INTERVIEW CONT'D**

- ▶ Don't try to explain everything, use your sound bites and stay on message!
- ▶ Don't be thrown off by the question; "discipline" the message
- ▶ Turn the questions back on the messages
- ▶ Don't answer the question, respond by speaking your talking points
- ▶ Speak slowly and clearly and avoid pause words ('um' 'like' 'uh')– every blink, twitch and 'um' or 'uh' is magnified

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## **GENERAL INTERVIEW TIPS: DURING THE INTERVIEW CONT'D**

- ▶ It is ok to ask the reporter to repeat or clarify the question
- ▶ Use 'BACKGROUND' if you need to discuss complex details that aren't in quotable sound bite form, invoke it 'let me go into some background here for details on that' and devoke 'I can come out of background now and give you our thoughts on this'
- ▶ When preparing to answer: Stop, Breathe, Relax, Think, Speak!
- ▶ When answering: Listen, Respond, Expand (ONLY if necessary), STOP!
- ▶ It is not your job to answer the reporter's questions; it is your job to deliver your message

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## **GENERAL INTERVIEW TIPS: DURING THE INTERVIEW CONT'D**

- ▶ Don't try to explain everything; stay on your key messages
- ▶ Remember that you set the pace and tone of the interview
- ▶ You can often determine the time, place and length of an interview
- ▶ Don't do your opponents' job for them
- ▶ Remember the audience is the target, not the reporter!
- ▶ Don't worry, the movement will not collapse if you mess up a sound bite

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## HOW TO SOUND

- ▶ It is not a conversation, but use a conversational tone
- ▶ Speak genuinely, credibly, confidently
- ▶ Find the emotions that fit the situation and use them (but be careful—ie: articulate your anger, don't express it!)
- ▶ Add personal inflection
- ▶ Make sure not to speak too quickly
- ▶ Speak at a normal volume, stress key points by raising your intensity level and pitch, NOT your voice
- ▶ Watch for 'up talk'

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## HOW TO SOUND CONT'D

- ▶ Vary the tone, intonation and word emphasis
- ▶ Vary the dynamics: pitch, speed, volume and emphasis (practice phrase: 'Don't you ever dare do that to me again' and 'That was fantastic. Thank you so much')
- ▶ Listen to yourself and get to know what you sound like. If you would like to sound a little different, practice imitating those voices that please you
- ▶ Keep expanding your vocal range. The wider your range, the more colorful and interesting your voice will be

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## **GENERAL INTERVIEW TIPS: AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

- ▶ Thank the reporter
- ▶ Debrief with others; how do you feel about the interview? What did they think?
- ▶ Watch/ listen to yourself (request a copy or have someone record it!) and evaluate how it went: notice which bites made it, did they ask the questions you were expecting, did you control the frame, did you stay on message?
- ▶ Re-evaluate your talking points and frames based on results.
- ▶ Leverage the interview. What can you do with the print/audio/video to further your goals?
- ▶ Practice some more based on what you learned.

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## FINAL THOUGHTS

- ▶ Consider your Messages –
  - Review sound bites and quotable phrases
  - Work on easy to relate facts and statistics
  - Have examples ready - real people's stories matter more than a white paper
  - Use analogies that paint a picture
- ▶ Project Positive Energy –
  - You're glad to be here
  - You're interested in your audience
  - You have knowledge you want to convey

END SECTION 1

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**MEDIA SKILLS WORKSHOP**

SECTION 2:

**PRINT INTERVIEWS**

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## **TIPS FOR PRINT INTERVIEWS**

- ▶ Find out the deadline
- ▶ Buy some prep time
- ▶ Set up the interview
  - Clear the desk
  - Close the door
- ▶ Use prepared notes
- ▶ Keep message points handy

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## **PRINT INTERVIEW TIPS CONT'D**

- ▶ **Speak clearly and concisely – be able to explain your story in a few brief sentences.**
- ▶ **Present your conclusion first. This sounds odd, but your time talking with a reporter will be limited, you need to assert the main point first and then support the statement with facts.**
- ▶ **Be honest. If you don't know something the reporter asks, don't guess. Tell him or her you will get back to him promptly with the correct information.**

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## **PRINT INTERVIEW TIPS CONT'D**

- ▶ **Never speak off the record. Assume everything you say will be reported, whether it's before, during, or after an interview.**
- ▶ **Make sure that what you tell the reporter is what you want to see in print**
- ▶ **Offer to be available for follow up questions.**

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## **PRINT INTERVIEWS: STAND UP AT AN EVENT**

- ▶ Ask the reporter about the type and length of story they are doing, who else they are talking to etc. Use this chance to shape the story
- ▶ Provide supporting background materials for the story (ie: press kit)
- ▶ Make sure your location is optimal for a focused interview
- ▶ If there is no photographer with the reporter, discuss options for getting them images to go with the story
- ▶ Stop for sirens, planes, etc and start over at the **BEGINNING** of your talking points when the noise subsides
- ▶ Offer reporter suggestions for others that can complete the story

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## **PRINT INTERVIEWS: COFFEE/LUNCH DATE WITH A REPORTER**

- ▶ Know how long you have, and take some time to get to know them, ask how they work, what they like to do, what would make them cover your issues etc
- ▶ Remember there is no such thing as 'off the record' SO BE CAREFUL
- ▶ Don't eat during the interview

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## **PRINT INTERVIEWS: EDITORIAL BOARD MEETINGS**

- ▶ Practice your presentation, time it and prepare responses for anticipated questions
- ▶ Think through who will attend and who will present which sections of your presentation
- ▶ Have data about their coverage on an issue (slant, quantity etc) and share it
- ▶ Make specific requests about shift in coverage and accountability
- ▶ Leave something behind

END SECTION 2

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SECTION 3:  
**RADIO INTERVIEWS**

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## **GENERAL TIPS FOR RADIO**

- ▶ For live interviews, focus on bridging
- ▶ For taped interviews, focus on flagging
- ▶ Assume you are always on the air, no off the cuff remarks
- ▶ If you are being taped, stop if you make a mistake and tell them you would like to start over
- ▶ Have a watch close by so you can monitor the time
- ▶ Don't answer the interviewer's question—respond with your message
- ▶ Speak in sound bites
- ▶ Feel free to have notes in front of you to remind you of your talking points, key facts and figures, etc BUT don't shuffle the papers

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## **GENERAL TIPS FOR RADIO CONT'D**

- ▶ Clarity, intensity and emotion make good radio
- ▶ Translate statistics and numbers: 1/3 is better than 33.3%
- ▶ Create a comparison with something meaningful (time, geography)  
"enough toxic sludge to fill the Blue Jays' Stadium to the rim"; "a stack of dollar bills from here to the moon"; "during the course of this interview four women will die of breast cancer" etc
- ▶ For more information, refer listeners to your website. Say it twice - it's better than your phone number

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## **RADIO INTERVIEWS: TAPED INTERVIEW OVER THE PHONE**

- ▶ Do your phone interviews from a quiet office, turn off your cell phone and other noisy objects around you
- ▶ Confirm in advance whether the questions will be heard by listeners (like a talk show or news magazine format) or whether they will edit in only your answers between commentary (like a public radio news piece)
- ▶ Don't do radio interviews from a cordless or cell phone (if it is a call in from the field cell is ok, but mention where you are and be descriptive!)
- ▶ If you make a mistake, stop and let them know you would like to begin again
- ▶ If the reporter doesn't ask you at the end if there is anything else you'd like to add, feel free to ask if you can make a final comment and then give it one more go with your sound bite
- ▶ Remember to flag

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## **RADIO INTERVIEWS: LIVE INTERVIEW OVER PHONE/LIVE TO TAPE**

- ▶ Listen to the show so you know what's been said so far
- ▶ When you are on, turn your radio down, and don't listen to the show while you are being interviewed
- ▶ Remember to bridge

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## **RADIO INTERVIEWS: LIVE INTERVIEW OVER PHONE / CALL INS**

- ▶ Organize supporters to call in during the interview and ask questions that prompt your points
- ▶ Don't let a hostile caller anger or fluster you
- ▶ Kindly acknowledge the caller's questions (possibly even by name) then use techniques like BRIDGE and TOUCH AND GO

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## **RADIO INTERVIEWS: LIVE OR TAPED DEBATE FORMAT**

- ▶ Be careful with volume and tone
- ▶ Don't be afraid to interrupt the host/other guest, be assertive to make your points and get equal time, but be civil, it is a delicate balance
- ▶ Make YOUR points, not your opposition's and stay on your message, don't get led off track by the direction of the debate, flag to get back on track
- ▶ If the opposition OR the host is hostile, be reasonable and calm in the face of their meanness. It is the best way to disarm them and look like you have the moral high ground... as they say...you get more flies with honey than with vinegar!!!

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## **RADIO INTERVIEWS: IN STUDIO INTERVIEWS**

- ▶ Ask for help adjusting the mike, ask how to speak into it properly
- ▶ Use the headphones
- ▶ Watch your posture, sit still
- ▶ Find the 'cough' button and use it if you need to drink, clear your throat, move papers

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## **RADIO INTERVIEWS: STAND UP INTERVIEWS AT AN EVENT**

- ▶ Ask the reporter about the type, length of show, story they are doing, who else they are talking to etc–Use this chance to shape/frame the story
- ▶ Provide supporting background materials for the story (ie: press kit)
- ▶ Make sure your location is optimal (quiet or with appropriate background noise)
- ▶ Stop for sirens, planes, etc and start over at the beginning of your talking points when the noise subsides
- ▶ Offer the reporter suggestions for others who can create the complete story

END SECTION 3

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**MEDIA SKILLS WORKSHOP**

SECTION 4:

# TELEVISION INTERVIEWS

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## **TELEVISION INTERVIEWS: GENERAL TIPS**

Know how to hold yourself:

- ▶ If standing, stand straight but not too stiff, no rocking, one foot slightly in front of the other, hands clasped in front or behind you, or on the podium (not in your pockets!)
- ▶ If sitting, sit up straight a few inches away from the back of the chair and watch out for how your clothes may bunch up. Sit on your jacket so it remains looking straight. If wearing a dress or skirt, be aware of hemline.
- ▶ Always avoid fidgeting and excessive hand motions, don't tap your foot or your pen
- ▶ Don't touch the mike or your hand piece
- ▶ Natural hand gestures that don't distract are ok (check out televangelists!)
- ▶ Don't be distracted by the reporter or the equipment or crew
- ▶ Don't address reporters personally

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## **TELEVISION INTERVIEWS: IMAGE PRESENTATION**

- ▶ Wear camera friendly fashion.
- ▶ Choose colors that don't distract, but NOT black or white (eggshell is your friend, so is blue)
- ▶ No patterns, plaids, floral, checks, stripes or dots (if you must, larger patterns wear better, but solids are best.)
- ▶ Small lapel pins are ok (think ribbons and flag pins) but no big buttons or slogans on t-shirts that won't show up (remember the shot is a tight one.)
- ▶ Keep hair brushed away from your face
- ▶ Glasses can create a glare.
- ▶ Wear make-up if they offer it and consider having some of your own (powder your face and forehead.)
- ▶ Prepare for bright lights, they can be very hot.

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## **TELEVISION INTERVIEWS: TAPED STAND UP INTERVIEW**

- ▶ Discuss with the crew how long you have for the interview
- ▶ Look at the interviewer, not into the camera
- ▶ Look at the same place throughout the interview, avoid looking shifty by not moving your eyes around
- ▶ If you are NOT live, it is ok to stop if you make a mistake and start over again
- ▶ If there is no interviewer, just a camera, have a person you like with you to stand in the spot where you need to look and have eye contact with someone who calms you (they can also offer to hold the microphone for the interview!)

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## **TELEVISION INTERVIEWS: TAPED STAND UP INTERVIEW CONT'D**

- ▶ Avoid squinting, set up the shot so the sun isn't in your eyes
- ▶ Think like a producer, are there visuals you want behind you?  
A prop that makes sense? You can even ask how the shot will be cropped
- ▶ Ask in advance about supplying 'b-roll' (additional footage for the story)

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## **TELEVISION INTERVIEWS: LIVE STANDUP FORMAT**

- ▶ Ask in advance how long your 'live shot' will last and practice a sound bite for that length
- ▶ Look at the interviewer, not into the camera
- ▶ Ask the on-camera (or remote) reporter what they will be asking you in advance
- ▶ Don't do this format unless you are really ready, and have practiced in high pressure situations in advance

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## **TELEVISION INTERVIEWS: TALK SHOW/NEWS MAGAZINE FORMAT**

- ▶ Know who else will be on the show, be clear that you want to be advised of any last minute changes
- ▶ Ask in advance about supplying 'b-roll' (additional footage for the story) and discuss the visual elements of the show in advance
- ▶ Assume you are **ALWAYS ON**, always being broadcast, even before your segment begins or when host is talking with other guests
- ▶ Don't be afraid to interrupt host/guest that you cannot see
- ▶ Don't fidget with your earpiece unless absolutely necessary to hear
- ▶ Don't fidget with your clothes, get set up before you go on and don't move around!
- ▶ Consider asking for a tv monitor to be placed for you at eye level just off where you are to look or on the floor but **BE CAREFUL** to avoid looking at it too much and looking shifty by moving your eyes around

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## **TELEVISION INTERVIEWS: LIVE OR TAPED REMOTE SATELLITE FORMAT**

- ▶ Know who else will be on the show, be clear that you want to be advised of any last minute changes
- ▶ Ask in advance about supplying 'b-roll' (additional footage for the story) and discuss the visual elements of the show in advance
- ▶ Look directly into the camera or just alongside it at the wall (ask the camera operator!)
- ▶ Often you are alone with the camera person in a room staring at nothing, so bring a photo of a loved one or something inspirational and some tape to tape up onto the wall where you need to look
- ▶ Keep your eyes steady

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## **TELEVISION INTERVIEWS: REMOTE SATELLITE FORMAT CONT'D**

- ▶ Assume you are **ALWAYS ON**, always being broadcast, even before your segment begins or when host is talking with other guests
- ▶ Don't fidget with your earpiece unless absolutely necessary
- ▶ Don't fidget with your clothes, get set up before you go on and don't move around!
- ▶ Consider asking for a tv monitor to be placed for you at eye level just off where you are to look or on the floor but **BE CAREFUL** to avoid looking at it too much and looking shifty by moving your eyes around

END SECTION 4

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